


WIRE



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Subscriber special

For details of how to subscribe to *The Wire*, turn to page 98 of this month's issue or go to www.thewire.co.uk



With this month's issue of *The Wire* all subscribers will receive an exclusive free copy of *See The Unseen: DOR Almanac 2004*

"In these times of selective interpretation, we passionately advocate the widening of vistas. See the unseen." So says Martin Parker, head of the UK outer limits label DOR, and compiler of this special CD that contains tracks drawn from the label's catalogue: 17 virulent strains of new electronic music from Functam, Doppler 20:20, A, Symetric Minds, Spooncurve, Apeiron, Nomadstation, Apollon, Koan, Muslinguaze, Chemical Plant, Aurilio Horor Film and Operation Mind Control. In addition, the disc features an interactive guide to the DOR operation containing information on all current DOR artists, as well as all the label's releases over the last 12 years. The CD is given away exclusively to all *The Wire*'s subscribers with copies of this month's issue. For more information on *DOR Almanac 2004*, go to www.dor.co.uk. For more information on how to subscribe to *The Wire*, go to www.thewire.co.uk or turn to page 98.

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Letters

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Thrashing Genesis P-Orridge and Chris Carter, London Astoria, 2004

TGI TG

The Astoria is now packed. I am right in the front row. It is not the place I expected to be in. This is it. This is it. Sadness and confusion led me to London. Read the whole Ra-TG story to get it.

TG hadn't performed for 20 years. Expectations to be fulfilled? What crew? What music? The world is in confusion. As it was. What else has changed? There are any ways to look at it. Scars and memories would rephrase it.

I can't. I'm 28. Didn't see it. Couldn't be there. Lights will stay on. It's not a show; not a showbusiness "event", as Genesis P-Orridge puts it. We all can feel the bitterness that has been troubling their lives and sleep lately. If there were no smiles on Carter, Casey and Sleszy's faces, I'd be worried. But I am not. Too much intelligence and wisdom on stage.

"The only thing we can do is play the best way we can," claims Genesis. This is about guilt and redemption. And they kick it. Music that wakes your inner side and kills it straight. We are all perverted souls. We are all the same. All crying. No words on it. Groaning, heaving, beating me up. Trashing the bass, blowing the angles, oh you followers, an army of freaks, you are part of the desperate one that would change the world you live in. For those who want it.

I want it bad. I shout it. I'll be in the first row again, even if I have to fight for it. About time to assess it. And guess what. The aging process. They were in their twenties. Now in their fifties. And they have changed. And they get together again. Simple as that. Being creative, giving it a chance, looking forward, and keeping it straight.

Shining, inside out, all my insides are looking on stage and I share it with you.
It is Thrashing Genesis. It is alive: a strange and freaky outfit to wear. Doesn't need your money, doesn't need your time, doesn't need writing, nor a recording.

Figure out our grandparents' secrets and private memories. Well, these are mine, and I bet they will stand the test of my lifetime. Give thanks and praise. Give thanks and praise.

Laurent Jolivet Paris, France

Thanks for nothing

A small point and a bigger one on your article about Eric Dolphy (*The Wire* 244). To say that David Stubbs "offers a personal benediction to" him looks patronising and is at best a slack use of language which had me feeling sceptical before even reading the article.

At the end of the piece, the writer quotes Eric Dolphy's observation about the way music disappears as it's played. While I don't have the resources to track down the quotation, as I remember and have always imagined it, Dolphy was referring to playing music and particularly to improvising, rather than simply to hearing music – and so he is not just offering us the truism that you can't jump into the same recording twice (or go home again).

Rereading, I notice that the author of the "benediction" goes to great lengths ("solo", "soliloquy", "playing", "musical thinking", "muck in", "chattering", etc) to avoid "improvised" or related words. It would be dull to speculate about why this is, but not too far-fetched to suggest it may be linked to his (mis?)interpretation of Eric Dolphy's words (and work?) and perhaps also to the fact that most people, even or especially music journalists, do most of their listening through loudspeakers (which cannot by definition be true of Eric Dolphy).

It is we who are blessed to still be able to hear a selection from Dolphy's music documented on recordings, but we shouldn't forget that these documents are not merely selective but destructive of context, and that to fully understand what he means

we need to go hear the live improvisations of today

and tomorrow and every day.
Caroline Kzebel London, UK

That's benediction as in "grace before or after a meal" (Chambers, 1998). Sorry you find giving thanks patronising – Ed

Arts elbowed

Having attended the Freedom of the City festival since it was realised for the first time in 2001, I have been motivated to write this letter.

In this astounding event (reviewed in *The Wire* 244) we have the opportunity to appreciate musicians associated with improvised music in Western culture, for instance the version 2004 presented: AMM, Evan Parker, Barry Guy, Paul Rutherford from UK; Musica Elettronica Viva from USA; Louis Moholo from South Africa and young English artists such as The World Book, some members of The Gelfingh or London Improvisers' Orchestra and David Stocker, Stan Sandell from Sweden.

To be innovative in any artform has been difficult throughout history. Nowadays, the record companies only support artists who follow fashion tendencies and their music does not last too long because taste must change every year – for the sake of the industry, which needs the sale of new products. In spite of these facts, the festival shows us the possibility of making artistic and quality music today.

I cannot understand why this festival does not have support from the Arts Council, considering they bring to us the most prominent figures who are giving an example of the real value of the music made out society. Most of them have a crucial participation in the history of music in the 20th and 21st centuries, such as John Tilbury, Friederickzewski, Alvin Curran, Richard Teitelbaum, among others, and with the



Juana Molina SEGUUNDO

After a long hiatus, Juana Molina returns with her sophomore effort, "Segundo." Juana Molina, recognized for her unique, hauntingly beautiful sound, returns with a new album that is both a continuation of her previous work and a new exploration of her sound.

Letters

highest music qualifications. Like this festival there are others around the world with the support of different arts councils in Switzerland, Germany, France, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, etc. I feel this situation is embarrassing for the English organisers, because in those countries the same musicians are welcomed with respect and professionalism, whereas here they have to pay their own expenses including travel tickets, accommodation, food and drinks.

Javier Chanda London, UK

Cor values

Rather than commenting on the substance of the music, Brian Morton's review of Cornelius Cardew's *Material* (Soundcheck, The Wire 244) seems intent on talking out a butt-ended version of the composer's entire life while drawing on an all too familiar sensationalism surrounding his death. He also suggests that the meaning in this music has become somehow dissipated into a fetishism for improvisers trying to recapture what ever it was that went wrong later in Cardew's career, which has nothing to do with the period of music represented on the CD. It's apparent that Cardew wanted to tell stories about reality and that his music had to change, but it's dangerous to assume that history stops on from looking back. It's not the music that assumes sovereignty over its time but those who think of artists as trespassing in it. It should be noted that AMV's *Inexhaustible Document* refers to a page by JS Bach, not necessarily Cardew, and it's also worth mentioning *Mountains*, from his later period, which does return to a degree of graphic scoring.

Chris Cusdy Cheltenham, UK

From heroes to zeroes

Re: The Wire 244. Great issue but have to say the viewpoint was Gaeata Dyal's sloppy review of Sonic Youth's *Sonic Nurse*. How come you gave it such little attention? SY just released a ferocious album full of energy and spike and all you can say is "endless displays of virtuosity over immediacy, energy and rough edges". Where are your ears? I'm not saying SY are untouchable, but found it strange that you chose to (more or less) ignore a group that you've given so much coverage in the past. It deserved a page review at least. Secondly, Ian Penman's harsh review of Patti Smith: OK, I think *Horses* was her best moment too, but *DMR* is not as awful as he makes out. He needs to see beyond his own foggy weilschmerz. Lighten up, old col!

Isabelle Watson London, UK

Hello 20th century

Many thanks for Alan Cummings's piece on Takehisa Kogazaki (The Wire 243). Until Kogazaki's more recent

inclusion on Sonic Youth's *Goodbye 20th Century* project, my only awareness of his work was through the 1986 RMP trio date *Global Village Suite* Improvised, which I copied, when released, only because the group featured the now departed Danny Davis and Peter Kowand.

I very much appreciate the broadened information gained through Cummings's writing, and Kogazaki's words, as much as I cherish that trio recording.

Bobby Hill Tokoro Park, USA

Mission position

Gaeata Dyal's review of *Mission Of Burma's* new album *Grofflon* (The Wire 243) states that between 1979-83 they recorded less than two dozen songs. Actually they recorded almost twice that number. I suspect Dyal is unaware of the *Tsang* double LP compilation *Let There Be Burma* which features 23 original studio recordings, only three of which appeared on the Rykodisc CDs. Some of these, such as "Peking Spring", "Nu Disco", "Active In The Yard", "Dirt" and "Hunt Again" are among the group's finest and fieriest melodic noise-fests. They must at least regard the latter two as often overlooked classics worth another shot, as they've rerecorded them for *Grofflon*. The first disc of *Let There Be Burma* has also been released as the *Forger* album, and five songs on the third side were released as a 12" EP at some point in the late 90s. I believe these recordings all surfaced after the group had to give guitarist Roger Miller's ears a rest, and may now be unavailable as they haven't featured on Rykodisc's reissues.

In an earlier issue (243), Dyal reviewed OOIDO's fourth album *Kita Kita Kita* and referred to their second album *Feather Float* as its predecessor. In fact there was another album, *Green And Gold*, released on a Japanese label between these two, but it was hard to track down in Britain. I've only heard that, and numerous Boredoms Japan-only releases, via Internet downloads. Why don't they sort out some kind of European release for all the *Rebore* and *Super Robots* CDs that no one can find in record shops here? If Boredoms can sell out gigs every time they play, surely it would make sense. How can massive entertainment corporations complain about falling sales when they can't even simply distribute their most innovative artists' CDs to their fans? Internet downloads and technological advances aren't killing music, just allowing more of us to hear more of it!

Which brings me to Richard Rees Jones's letter (issue 243) complaining that iPod users are missing important contextualising elements of music by transferring music to hard disk. This is not really true, as all the information he thinks they are missing can almost certainly be found online, and how many iPod users haven't worked out how to use the Internet yet? I know I've found much more information about music

online than I ever read in some CD booklets. I don't know any iPod owners, so can't really comment too accurately on their smugness or otherwise, but if they do indeed form a "smug fraternity" (so no women buy these devices?) then surely that's more likely down to the cost of the machines and the owners' implied affluence than the fact that they have left a pile of CD booklets at home.

Graeme Rowland Manchester, UK

The lady is a tramp

Thanks to Ian Penman, I don't feel so alone any longer. I thought I was the only one who felt that Patti Smith's last few albums were uninspired. In the 70s I thought that no one could touch her passion and invention. With every new release in the 90s being described as a return to greatness, I kept thinking that maybe there was something wrong with me. What wasn't I hearing that everyone else was? I felt guilty and treacherous. Penman put it perfectly in his review of *Trampin'* (Soundcheck, The Wire 243): "dull, dumpy, unjustifiably angry AOR rock album no more, no less".

Dennis Sammers Royal Oak, USA

Animal wrongs

Regarding Rob Young's review of *Animal Collective's* *Sung Tongs* (Soundcheck, The Wire 243), I find it very unfortunate that that assignment fell into his lap. I remember reading David Stubbs's review of the *Spont They're Gons*, *Spont They're Vanished*, *Darius*, *Marcellus* (The Wire 236) and being amazed at all the references he derived from these albums. I wonder if the review would've been more favourable if it was written by someone who was actually familiar with the group's entire recorded output? Or by someone who knows what strange forest *Animal Collective* are coming from? I just hope Young doesn't draw the short straw and gets berdened with the task of reviewing the upcoming *Black Dicks* album. That would be too much.

Michael Baspaly Winnipeg, Canada

FW, I am familiar with, indeed enamoured of, AC's "entire recorded output", which made *Sung Tongs* sound all the more like one idea recycled over and over, ad infinitum, yong tong! kiddle eye po... --RY

Corrections

Issue 243 In the HipHop column, the review of DJ Mitsu's *The Beats EP* incorrectly stated that Mitsu is from Tokyo. He is in fact from Sendai, some 300 km north of the capital. []

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VERSION CITY ROCKERS * DARKER ROOTS
ESTRENA: AGOSTO, 2004

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RONNIE DAVIS
GLEN BROWN
RANKING JOE
LITTLE JOHN
YABBY YOU



Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.
Compiled by The Trawler

Steve Lacy: RRP

Sadly there are several deaths to report this month. **Elvin Jones**, the drummer who teamed up with John Coltrane in 1960 and remained at his side for six years, has died aged 76. Born on 9 September 1927, and one of three jazz playing brothers (along with trumpeter Thad and pianist Hank), Jones played a key role in the development of Coltrane's blistering energy music as it passed through 1964's watershed *A Love Supreme* and beyond into total freedom. His style, deconstructing the swing pulse into multiple vortices of offbeats and syncretic crosscurrents, in which rhythmic structures spanned wide arches over the music, was ideally suited to the emerging modal jazz spearheaded by Coltrane and his mentor Miles Davis. He was on board for 1965's free jazz scream-up, *Ascension*, but finally felt unable to continue with Coltrane on his spiritual journey into abrasive freeplay, leaving the group in January 1966 to join Duke Ellington. Jones defended Coltrane's explorations to the latter's death in 1967, saying, "You wouldn't expect Einstein to be playing jazz, would you?" Throughout the 70s he accompanied a variety of players, finally forging a lasting association with saxophonist and flautist Sonny Fortune. He was still touring with his group *Jazz Machine* up until 2003. He died on 18 May 2004 leaving a wife Kelce and a son and daughter >>> **Steve Lacy** died of cancer on 4 June 2004 aged 69. He was born Steven Lascitz in New York on 23 July 1934, and quickly progressed from clarinet to soprano saxophone after hearing Sidney Bechet playing Duke Ellington's "The Mooche". In the late 50s he could hold his own on stages with the likes of Henry Red Allen and Buck Clayton, and at the same time was a member of free pianist Cecil Taylor's ensemble. Such versatility characterised his entire career: from 1957 to the mid-60s he worked with Gil Evans, Thelonious Monk, Rosewell Rudd, Don Cherry and Carla Bley. In 1968

began a long period of wandering; he toured Argentina with Enrico Rava and various South African jazzers, then moved to Rome where he joined fellow US expats Fredric Rzewski and Allen Curran in the classical/free jazz crossover outfit *Musica Elettronica Viva*. In 1970 he moved to Paris where he remained for another three decades. He has collaborated with a huge range of players – a small cross section would include Alan Silva, Mal Waldron, Kent Carter, John Stevens, Franz Koglmann, Derek Bailey, Globe Unity Orchestra, and his wife, the cellist Irene Aebi. In 2002 he moved back the US to take up a teaching position at the New England Conservatory of Music, Massachusetts. As a personal side note, his 1974 track "The Wire", from the album *Scrap*, gave this magazine its name, and he appeared on the cover of our first issue in 1982. He is survived by his wife >>> Composer and violinist **John Mayer**, best known for his pioneering Indo-Jazz fusions recorded in the late 60s with Jamaican saxophonist Joe Harriott, was killed in a road accident on 9 March 2004 near his home in North London; he was 73. Mayer left his home town of Calcutta as a 22 year old, travelling by sea to England where he won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music in London. He was a member of two prestigious orchestras before beginning to write fusion compositions for mixtures of Western and Eastern instruments, which eventually caught the ear of Yehudi Menuhin. But it was the three records by Mayer's "double quintet" with Harriott, *Indo-Jazz Suite* (1966) and *Indo-Jazz Fusions I* (1967) and *II* (1968), which were his greatest innovation, carving out composed spaces in which Harriott's group could improvise, often around rag-style themes >>> As we were going to press, news came in that guitarist **Robert Quine** has taken his own life. Quine's distinctive roaring guitar acted as a pillar for many unconventional musicians, most notably Richard Hell in the *Voidoids*, but also Lou

Reed (on *The Blue Mask*), Tom Waits and Brian Eno. He moved to New York from Akron, Ohio in the early 70s and his early guitar inspiration came from the electric jazz of Miles Davis. A catalytic figure in the post-punk and new wave era, he produced recordings by Teenage Jesus And The Jerks and DNA, an association that continued into the 90s with his contribution to the *Blue Man CD The Painted Desert* (1996). He had also undertaken the curation of a series of Velvet Underground bootleg tapes, sanctioned by Universal, that he had recorded from the audience as an obsessed fan in the late 60s in San Francisco >>> British turntablists **Philip Jeck** and **Janek Schaefer** have recorded a duo album in the Turkish city of Istanbul. Invited to perform by promoters Kod Musik, they arrived in January this year to find the metropolis out of action due to one of the worst snow storms the country had ever seen. With the concert cancelled, the pair retreated to their apartment with a pile of Turkish vinyl and recorded a CD's worth of material – once the power came back on >>> Gornemaght, the "fantasy opera" composed by Gen founder **Irene Schmidt**, is into its second run of European performances. This month the work based on Mervyn Peake's *Titus Groan* trilogy is given three performances at the Grand Théâtre de la Ville de Luxembourg on 30 June and 1-2 July. Further information at www.spoonrecords.com/news.html >>> Steve Dineford and Paul Pace have curated a series of monthly "free free improvisations" at Ray's Jazz in Foyles bookshop, Central London. The early evening sessions will take place at 6pm on the last Thursday of each month until November, beginning with Alex Ward (29 July) and continuing with Simon H Fell & Marco Mattos (26 August), Sylvia Kelett & Gine Bell (30 September), Chris Burn (28 October) and Sarah Wainwright (25 November). For info, email rays@foyles.co.uk. □

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"I love the feeling of places at night," says Graham Sutton of Bark Psychosis. "That's when environments leech out. It's a bit like Mediterranean buildings, the way at night they don't just seep out heat, but all the stuff that's gathered up in them during the day."

Sutton is accounting for the nameless sense of seeps, the invisible, toxic energy that Bark Psychosis's late 80s, early 90s music always exuded, which also informs and infects their comeback album, their first in ten years. As he intones on "Scum," BP's 1992 masterpiece, "It's all around you..." That 23-minute track, recorded in a derelict church, whose dark sonic ambience is incorporated into the piece, is the lengthy epitome of Bark Psychosis at their finest. Although there's a sweet languor to their (pre-) post-rock, it's not cocooned or hermetic. Always, the ducts and vents are open to the nasty world just metres away. There's something happening beneath the floorboards, an imperceptible air of menace, decay, danger. Sutton lives in a bohemian pocket of East London, in the shadow of a gigantic gas tower, around the corner from Throbbing Gristle's old HQ, up the road from London Fields, one of the city's former mess plant sights following the plague.

All around you. "Last year, there was a spate of murders just round here," recalls Sutton. "There was a burnt body dumped at 3am in the morning, in the road where I live. Another body dumped in a suitcase down the road. Yet outwardly it seems so middle class."

Bark Psychosis emerged in 1989, when Sutton was just 17, part of a semi-forgotten British wave of guitar innovators all operating on the cusp between rock and the more abstract, burgeoning Ambient/electronic scene – fellow travellers included Seafast and Disco Inferno. "Disco Inferno came from our neck of the woods," he remembers. "We were all just arrogant kids, basically. But so naive about how things worked. There'd always been music in my family," he continues. "My Dad used to teach music at school. He's currently an organist at a crematorium – actually, for a whole circuit of crematoriums in East London. It's funny, he talks about them as 'gigs.' He's even got an organ."

Over five years, on a series of labels such as Cheree

and Virgin's Circa, BP's releases drifted, unmoored across genre boundaries, even embracing a notion of jazz, of sorts – they played Ronnie Scott's. "But we took a simplicity from jazz," he explains. "Nothing ornate. The beauty of simplicity has also been a big thing for me – strip away unnecessary, mainly ego-driven, peripheral, frilly bits." For Sutton, the ultimate tribute was when Chris Morris used their song, "Pendulum Man" on the soundtrack to his TV series *Jam*. So determined was Morris to use the track that he spent weeks hunting down BP's former drummer for permission.

A more pliant, less artistically obstreperous soul than Sutton could easily have allowed Bark Psychosis to concentrate on the more commercial, user-friendly aromatic rework of their potentially Trippish tendencies. However, BP were always more caffeinated than coffee table. Virgin dropped them in 1994 and Sutton, a tech-head and longtime dubber, took a sharp downturn into drum 'n' bass, recasting himself as Boymerang and working with Grooverider and Metalheadz. "They were into the idea of all kinds of new things coming from any angle," recalls Sutton. "I'd talk to them about people like The Stooges, whom they might not have come across. I'd impart a different flavour on the music." Boymerang yielded some gems, including the fast-cut shadowplay of "Luziferus". However, drum 'n' bass would fall foul of a new, simplistic purism, where hipster, dogmatic nobles of '4 Real' held sway over the idea that what is musically 'real' is up for grabs, in a state of flux. It also became assimilated into TV soundtracks as a too-easy signifier for youth energy. "For a period of time it was fadcasting," remarks Sutton. "Every week, at Blue Note on a Sunday, or Metalheadz, you could hear the music changing and evolving in front of you. Before you knew it, it was in hair adverts and traffic reports. I developed an allergy to drum 'n' bass. I felt this need to bleed all the energy out of my music, bleed it white."

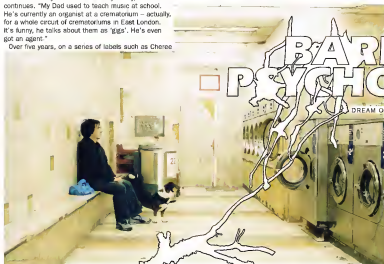
Hence Codename: Dustersucker, which Sutton cheekily describes as "21st century white urban music". Part of the reason for its delay is that Parlophone, to whom he was signed, were "distraught" that he was not making another drum 'n'

bass record or "some downtempo shit", and refused to allow him to release his new material. Only now, following a protracted legal dispute, has he been able to release it on Fire.

In many ways, Codename: Dustersucker is a return to former Bark Psychosis values – old friends such as Pete Dinklage recur on vibraphone, the jazz-brushed orchestration is reminiscent of their hitherto only album proper, *Hex* (1994). Shades of Talk Talk are evoked by the presence of that group's Lee Harris on drums, whom Sutton originally met when, extraordinarily, he was approached by another drummer falsely claiming to be Harris, who'd even formed a group comprising players convinced this was the 'real' Lee Harris. Sutton got wind of the deception when the doppelgänger also started bragging about his former days in the SAS. He tipped off the actual Talk Talk drummer and he and Sutton became friends.

However, Codename: Dustersucker is more abstract and subtly tangential than Bark Psychosis Mk 1, moving imperceptibly from the bright tonal blue into the dark outer reaches of sonic orbit. Sometimes, the metamorphosis is shocking, as on "From What Is Said To What It's Read", in which guitars impact like a collapsing asbestos ceiling. Sometimes the change impinges like a weather front, as on "INGEST". Best of all is the tolling, abiding "Miss Abuse", culminating in what sounds like a squally Ad-House device captured and tortured by an anti-electronic militia. Sutton says the David Lynch film *Mulholland Drive* was an influence on the making of the record, thematically – "surface facades, self-deception, undernotes of violence". Nothing as it should be, Codename: Dustersucker has benefited from being constantly rethought, refreshed, rearranged, post-produced over five years. One ostensibly languid, spontaneous drum part is the result of 1000 different edits – another indicator of the ease/unease dichotomy at the heart of Bark Psychosis.

"There's too much stuff out there, too much stuff put out with an 'Oh, this'll do' attitude. It won't," concludes Sutton. "Why is this only the second Bark Psychosis album in ten years? Because I care about it so much." □ Codename: Dustersucker is out now on Fire



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DENGUE FEVER

CAMBODIA ROCKS. BY RICHARD HENDERSON



With a frontline peopled by guitar, sax and Farfisa organ, the group onstage at the Los Angeles club Spaceland are honouring a timeless garage band paradigm. Yet their attire invokes South East Asian chic, and "I'm 18" is one of the few occasions that English gets a look-in during their set. From that song's opening bars on, its exotic metres and timbres reveal Dengue Fever as anything but a typical bar band. They have played here every Monday night for the past month, yet the resident mixer remains at sea when confronted with their sound: surf guitar intersecting with a towering bassist's sinuous funk; keyboard ostinato spiralling outward from Aoki Abasi; a drummer obviously conversant with saravali rhythms intrinsic to circle dances, and the man playing baritone sax stands above a phalanx of signal processing gear. Vocalist Ch'hom Nimol suddenly materialises from behind the curtains, a cinnamon-toned aspenborn whose perfectly contoured floor-length silk dress glows with the colours of irradiated crayons. As she sings in the Khmer tongue of her native Cambodia, her voice is swathed in reverb, becoming instantly mythic. There is some resemblance to operatic coloratura and possibly more to the vapour trails of skywriting. The PA system's flaws are forgiven.

Several nights later, after a rehearsal for an upcoming appearance at LA's Knitting Factory, Dengue Fever lounge around a picnic table in the backyard of bassist Senon Williams's Los Feliz home. Birds and insects are in full song despite the late hour. Only woodwind player David Rakic is absent, off exploring the desert near Joshua Tree, the others explain. "The UFOs may find him out there," Senon speculates. "But he told us not to worry if he didn't make soundcheck, he'd see us when we went on." In the chattering darkness, Dengue Fever discuss the logic of a southern Californian group resurrecting the late 1960s pop of Cambodia.

Keyboardist Ethan Holtzman travelled through South East Asia in 1998. The contrasting moods of neighbouring countries there made an immediate

impression. "Vietnam was so formal and restrained, whereas Cambodia was looser and more laidback, with the air of a lawless society," he reflects. "I began to hear this amazing music, which I was told was common prior to the appearance of [murderous Khmer Rouge leader] Pol Pot." The music Holtzman heard, originally created by Asian players much in the thrall of The Seeds and The Yardbirds, was a revelation. Upon returning to California, he shared a trove of cassettes bought in open-air markets with his guitarist brother Zac. The pair began learning their favourite songs, many of which appeared on the galvanising bootleg compilation *Cambodian Rocks* (Parallel Works). Soon enough, the brothers had enlisted Williams, Rakic and drummer Paul Smith in their efforts to recreate the sound of swinging Phnom Penh, in the years before the Killing Fields.

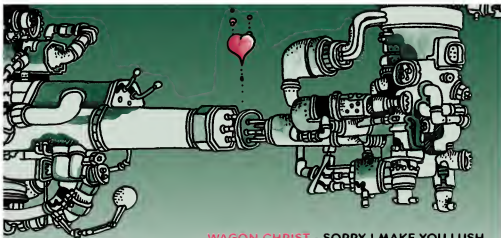
Inspired by Cambodian pop idol Ros Serey Sothea, the nascent group began a series of forays in search of a vocalist within the Asian expatriate neighbourhood — Little Phnom Penh — of nearby Long Beach. There they discovered Ch'hom Nimol singing in the Dragon House restaurant. Born in Battambang, legendary home to Cambodia's best musicians, Nimol had enjoyed success as a young recording artist, prior to emigrating. With the promise of recording a cover of Jon Mitchell's "Both Sides Now" for the soundtrack of actor/director Matt Dillon's recent film set in Cambodia, *City Of Ghosts*, she was convinced to join. This was to be both Dengue Fever's first recording and the beginning of a wary relationship between the group and those entrusted to provide accurate translations of song lyrics, which continues through the present. For instance, Zac Holtzman realised that the translator had emended his own scenarios in the first version of the Mitchell song. "I found myself wondering, where are the 'moons and fumes and ferns wheels'?" smiles Zac. "He rewrote the lyrics completely, and instead had a guy playing guitar for his girlfriend on the beach." Trying different Cambodian translators, they discovered that an English lyric of a dozen syllables can easily be

inflated to four times that length in Khmer. As a result, Zac notes, "We pay a lot more attention to song structure now." After learning Khmer lyrics phonetically, he now sings lead on occasion. The Cambodians in the crowd, he reports, are most impressed.

Though LA rock club patrons still comprise much of their following, it considerably expanded with the 2003 release of their first album, *Dengue Fever*, on Web Of Mystery, and a brief tour of the West Coast exposed them to other expatriate audiences, often with memories of Nimol's earlier career, and to other musicians with comparable agendas. Zac recalls, "When we played our first show in San Francisco, there was a Thai group [Neung Phak, another incarnation of Oakland based Mono Pause] that wanted to challenge us to a battle of the bands! They're not afraid to be super-cute."

"We've been offered the Cambodian tour circuit," he continues, "which is spread across the US, casinos, nightclubs, but there are a couple of requirements..." "They're not ready for what we do," Senon adds. "We would have to conform to their style, playing three or four hour sets, learning 20 new covers. And they'd want us to add four other girl singers. With one of the offers, the promoters basically said: 'Bring in the musicians, we'll teach you all the parts'." But, Zac observes, "The good thing about their shows is that everyone dances, they hit the floor and do circle dances and line dances, with no self-consciousness about anyone's age involved."

The group have already recorded a second album, provisionally titled in *The Den Of Horrors*. Principal tracking was done in a new studio converted from a racketball court located in the shadow of the Getty Center in posh LA suburb Bel Air. Unlike their debut, which contained ten covers and two originals, the new disc's material was written almost entirely by Dengue Fever. With a nod to their original repertoire of Cambodian pop classics, Zac confesses, "We're throwing the crutch away." □ Dengue Fever is out on *Web Of Mystery*



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The main influences are immediately audible: the headlong bop of Jackie McLean and the sour tonality and extremes of pitch we now automatically associate with Anthony Braxton. It goes further than that, though, and in Steve Lehman, a 23-year-old New Yorker with little profile outside his native city, we've got one of the most exciting young saxophone voices on the current scene.

Lehman—say it “lee-man”—cut his studio teeth on the lo-fi CIMP label with two terse, tightly written quintet sets, *Structural Fire* and *Camouflage*. The presence of both guitarist Kevin O’Neal and percussionist Kevin Norton in the line-up suggested a player close to the Braxton circle, and the Wesleyan University email address confirms it. Braxton’s deceptively complex compositional philosophy—actually a root and branch primer—lies a little way down the line in the Lehman story so far. “Between the ages of nine and 14, I lived in Hartford, Connecticut, which is where Jackie McLean teaches,” he says. “He became a kind of idol for me and when I started studying with him, just doing the basic things like listening to great music and trying to work out what made it work and why it was important, I was conscious that I was doing exactly what he described doing with Charlie Parker—just trying to spend as much time as possible in his presence, learning from everything he did and said.”

What he learned is evident in the looping, urgent line of “Structural Fire” itself, a piece that also figures in extended performance on Lehman’s new live *Camouflage* Trio CD (interface with bassist Mark Dresser [another Braxton alumnus] and drummer Phereon skLaff). “The idea,” Lehman explains, “was to write a theme in which one bar would be in 7/8, the next in 5/4, the one after that in 2/4, and so on, but

keeping the consistency of the line.” It not only works in its original, more obviously written-out form, it makes for a formidably blowing theme as well.

The young saxophonist wasn’t initially aware of Anthony Braxton’s work, saying, “I went to Wesleyan because I was determined to go somewhere academically strong.” He’s a double major in music and French literature (the Jean-Paul Sartre title *Huis Clos* appears on the trio record), and won a Fulbright grant to visit Paris, where he taught an undergraduate course on current trends in improvised music at the Paris Conservatory. He’s rightly nervous of any suggestion that abstract or, God forbid, literary ideas should be obvious in his jazz writing, but there is a strong existential urgency, a conviction that music only emerges in the making of it rather than in some idealised intellectual space, in everything Lehman has done so far. It’s edgy, heroic music in which thought and passion are inextricably linked. It also squares impressively with his conviction that the hard-won freedoms of the 20th century—Gide, Stockhausen, he intriguingly includes Meredith Monk and Braxton—are not ends in themselves but need to be re-examined and re-applied judiciously. “I’m not interested in silent protests or breaking instruments in half but in trying to create music that’s aware of all that history without being imprisoned by it.”

If he was naturally drawn to the alto saxophone, the other half of his current armoury is the rarely heard soprano. He’s again rightly wary of approaches that reduce him to a genetic clone of his two teachers, and while Braxton has bedded just about every surviving member of the saxophone family, Lehman’s attraction to the tiny, treacherously pitched horn comes from another source. “Two main reasons, I guess,” proposes Lehman. “It’s the saxophone that sounds

most like a double-reeded instrument, an oboe or shawm, and so it’s got that slightly alien sound that Coltrane created on the soprano. But the real reason was that I was fascinated by a composer and oboe player called Heinz Holliger, particularly when he was playing his own music. Things like his *Chords/ Studies* were very important to me.” Indeed, Lehman makes bold use of Holligerlike multiphonics and chord effects on his smaller horn.

The past few years have seen Lehman emerge as an instrumentalist, notably on Braxton’s Andrew Hill tribute, and with a range of musicians including Hill, William Parker, Oliver Lake and Michelle Roseworren. He has also established a presence as a composer, with commissions from as far afield as The Janacek Philharmonic and the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. Currently, he’s working with hot nine pianist Vary Jay in a group called Fieldwork and leading a new quintet that includes bassist Drew Gress, fellow saxophonist Mark Shim, vibraphonist Chris Dingman and drummer Eric McPherson, who has been the anchor of Jackie McLean’s group since the 90s. They have a CD out at the same time as the live trio, *Artificial Light*, on Fresh Sound’s cadet imprint New Talent, is “an attempt to create a more groove-oriented music, without using repetition as a structural device”. Set alongside the more freeform interface, it confirms his standing as the man to watch on the ever-evolving New York scene. The trio record was actually recorded in Portugal, so given those ongoing ties to France it’s not impossible that people will get the chance to catch him this side of the Atlantic as well. Can’t be too soon. □ *Structural Fire* and *Camouflage* are on GWAR Artificial Light. It is on Fresh Sound New Talent and Interface on Olean Feed. More information at www.trematzi.com



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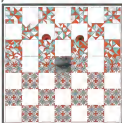
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AT ISTANBUL'S PHONEM FESTIVAL.

GLOBAL FEAR: ISTANBUL



Left to right: Bernd Friedmann & Jaki Liebzon, Lali Puna, Four Tet

A hot May weekend in Istanbul, and security is tight. The US Embassy building lies gutted and empty behind its perimeter wall, following the bombing in November 2003. Further into the crammed shopping and market district of Beyoğlu, the British Embassy, as yet unscathed, has added an extra paranoid layer of metallic cladding to its wall, and has retrieved behind the net curtains of war – a thick curtain of scaffolding and canvas. Emblazoned on the front of a gigantic sports complex that gazes down on the ancient city, is a banner that reminds you – as if you needed reminding – that Eurovision is happening right here, right now, in the week leading up to the finals.

At the airport I am greeted by Seda Asan, my guide for the entire stay. She is one of several personal guides assigned to all participants at the Phonem Festival. I was anticipating a couple of days of wandering at leisure slowly getting lost in Istanbul's busy Byzantine citadel, but as it turns out, there is someone prepared to hail cabs, take you wherever you want to go, steer you through confusing streets to the venue and back. In the charged atmosphere of Istanbul, this bridgehead between the easternmost fringe of Europe and the battlefields of Bush and Blair's Alexandrian conquest, such chaperoning is apparently considered necessary. Well, if anything untoward happened to any of the participating artists, it would not reflect well on a cultural event that is one small part of a wider attempt to paint Turkey as a worthy entrant to the EU club. As well as Eurovision, a vibrant international art biennale, and Phonem, a massive club complex is under construction on Golden Beach, on the banks of the Bosphorus strait, which will reportedly cater for 25,000 people. There is also a Cinemathèque due to open in the next couple of years, bringing art film into one dedicated space in the city centre. As Phonem organizer Necati Tufekci, of promoters Kod Müzik, points out, "Until the 1990s, Turkish music fans' experience with international pop music was limited to LPs and cassettes. There was no live music. More recently the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and the Arts has changed a lot of things in the cultural life of Istanbul." The city is particularly receptive to such changes in a country otherwise relatively traditional. It is home to almost a fifth of Turkey's entire population and is the principal site of the best universities and the nation's more cosmopolitan intellectual culture. Turkey's previous

military administration did not have much funding available for the arts, but the past decade has seen an influx of capital from the private sector, too – witness the subtly titled summer outdoor event, Rock 'n' Coke.

Now in its second year, Phonem resembles so many small-scale European festivals: taking place in a couple of medium-size club venues, featuring a smattering of current electronics practitioners, plus a side dish of associated workshops and panel discussions. One emergent theme of the festival is the mutation of electronic artists into fully activated live ensemble. On the evening I arrive, the live acts at the Babylon Club include Lali Puna and Kieran Hebden, aka Four Tet. Munich's Lali Puna I had always had down as a rather inconsequential electronica vocal act, from their rather restrained early releases on Morr Music, but the presence of The Notwist's Markus Acher on bass and various sampling soundscapes, as well as a guitarist and drummer, duly backs up Vascio Tinschlag's feisty vox. The Four Tet live experience these days packs a similar punch, far more chiselled than the whimsical dynamic of her recordings – Hebden feeds his beats through a noise shredder, grinding it down in a manner that keeps the crowd keen.

The Yerebatan Cistern is one of the sonic wonders of the town. Lodged in the very oldest quarter of the town, it is a gigantic manmade abcess underneath the famous Sultanahmet (Blue Mosque), occupying a footprint of 9800 square metres, and supported by 600 columns placed there by its builder, the Emperor Justinian in 532 AD. The cistern had only been in use as a subterranean reservoir serving the palace of Topkapı and its gardens for around a century when its existence was forgotten, and the enormous chamber was only rediscovered by accident 1000 years later. Now restored as a major tourist attraction, its 9800 square metre interior is filled with piped classical music of Turkish odd as you wander concrete walkways listening to the sizzle of drops of water that even now cascade into pools from somewhere in the ceiling. In fact, in 1994 a German composer named Günther Zechberger composed *Tangerente*, a piece for chamber ensemble, "sublimator" and slide projections, designed to set off the enormous acoustic resonance and extended echo duration of the brick-walled interior. No record of this endeavour survives, but although the cistern was used as an exhibition space in the last

Biennale, the place is crying out for something like a Pauline Oliveros Deep Listening performance.

On the evening after the panel, a heaving throng fills Babylon once again. First on stage are the Cologne group of Bernd Friedmann and can drummer Jaki Liebzon, flanked by Hayden Chisholm, a New Zealandist who settled in Cologne some years ago to study at the city's music academy. His saxophone and electronically altered windwinds have turned up on a number of Improv and post-rock groupings including Pluramon. Friedmann's snappy aesthetic, turning beat music inside out and reducing detail until a fuzzy surface of off-pulses and whines, is ably backed up by the softest pair of hands in contemporary percussion. Jaki, who claimed to have tired of playing with bass guitars in Can, as in suitable company here, with his unique kit of all sorts and snare, plus cymbals, and no bass drum. It's impossible to take your eyes off his mesmerising technique as he first constructs the grooves of his rhythms and then methodically proceeds to whip up the jolts, infills, cross-braces and well cladding, furnishing the whole with delicate upward bashes to the crash cymbals. Meanwhile the upright figure of Friedmann acts as dub foreman on site, swirling his concrete ank around the room and plastering it with the liquid tones of Chisholm's reeds. It is a very delicate music, relying on close listening and synchronisation of the human and programmed elements, but the visible relief on their faces when it gets as entertainment enough.

Console, from southern Germany, also convey an infectious spirit in their six-piece line-up, a melodrama fest choreographed by leader Martin Griebmann. He has built up a dynamic power-electro force with synths, drums, keyboards and guitars, and the voice of Man Ostermeier. The group have a sense of infectious fun even when the power browns out and they are forced to play on with emergency backup, while video artist Anton Kuan even jumps on stage to wave his laptop displaying the images that have been wiped off the projector screen.

Turkish musicians Lüz Fando, playing the small basement venue Dülünce, are psychoacousticians who will shortly be kicking off a radio series on mind-altering electronic music. The dark ambience of their elongated total music stretches the night into a long endless vista. □ Kod Müzik Website: www.kodmuzik.com

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TESTED BY EDWIN POUNCEY
PHOTOS BY JOHN HOOPER

Sunn O))) guitarist, composer and graphic artist Stephen O'Malley was born in 1974 in Peterborough, New Hampshire, USA. He moved to Seattle in 1976 where he first became involved in music by joining a Highlander pipe band while at high school. For four years he played the Scottish bagpipes.

Soon afterwards he became interested in hard rock and Heavy Metal, an obsession that, in 1993, eventually led to him producing his own annual magazine on the subject called *Descent*. Although it only lasted five issues, it is now considered one of the key documents of the entire underground Metal movement. As well as writing about the genre, O'Malley also took an active part in it by forming groups such as Thor's Hammer and Burning Witch with fellow musician and enthusiast Greg Anderson. Although neither of these two groups survived, O'Malley and Anderson are best known today as the principal members of Sunn O))), which they formed in 1998 after meeting up again in Los Angeles. Taking their inspiration from such so-called 'stoner rock' luminaries as Earth and The Melvins, Sunn O))) took the formula to a new level of subterranean sonic rumble, further enhanced by their onstage uniform of Grimmbrobes and the excessive use of dry ice during their performances. Sunn O))) have released numerous recordings, the latest being their sequel to last year's *White 1* called, logically, *White 2*.

O'Malley's other groups outside Sunn O))) include the quartet Khanate, formed in New York City in 2000; Lotus Eaters, his long planned collaboration with comrade Aaron Turner; and Ginnungagap whose debut recording has just been released as a 3" CD on the Aurora Borealis label.

In his capacity as an album cover designer, O'Malley has continued to work on a variety of projects, many of which have been released on Southern Lord, the company that he and Anderson set up in 1998 "as an outlet to release our own music in a broader format". The Jukebox took place in London.

ALBERT AYLER MASONIC INBORN (PART 1)

FROM MUSIC IS THE HEALING FORCE OF THE UNIVERSE
(IMPULSE) 1999

[Listens to the sound of Ayler playing a bagpipe intro] I obviously recognise the instrumentation. The drones are tuned higher than normal for Scottish pipes. Are there two bagpipers on there?

No, just one. It's Albert Ayler.

Wow! I haven't heard this before. That's very cool.

The reason I'm playing you this is because I heard that your interest in drone music began when you were learning to play bagpipes at high school.

That's right. There was a Highlander pipe band and you could sign up for this course to become a member. I did that as a teenager and played with them for four or five years. The three drone pipes were tuned to A, which luckily enough is what I tune my guitar to today. As a kid I remember seeing this parade of bagpipers in my home city of Seattle and was struck by it.

What immediately attracted you to the sound of the instrument?

It was the timbre of the reed, I think. The harmonic between the three drone pipes was really interesting. It was so dense. Having that next to your head while you're playing is also very hypnotic and soothing, but having to control a chanter at the same time means you have to be fully aware. Balancing those two different mindsets at once was really fun to do.

Many people can't stand the sound of Scottish bagpipes. Why do you think that is?

The reed on the chanter is really tight so it creates a lot of volume. This instrument was designed for war, to be heard over really large distances, but the way most people experience Scottish pipes now is up close. The frequency of the chanter is abrasive to people's ears. Also, the piping of a lot of the bagpipe tunes is erratic and staggered, with a limited range of notes going on which might not seem melodic.

Did the fact that it was a war instrument also attract you to the Scottish bagpipes?

That definitely. The regiment [I was in] was marching with eight bagpipers, a couple of snare drummers, tenor drummers and a bass drum... extremely powerful. I was 15 and hadn't performed five before that, but the volume and accuracy of it was an incredibly big rush.

LA MONTE YOUNG & MARIAN ZAZEELA

"THE TAMBURAS OF RANDIT PRAN NATH:
82 VII 15 CA 6:35-7:35PM NYC"

FROM THE TAMBURAS OF RANDIT PRAN NATH (JUST DREAMS)
1999

It's tambura... hmmm! Are there actually loops happening?

No, it's being played live – you can hear the sound of traffic going by outside.

Terry Riley?

It's actually La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela playing tamburas. We've spoken about the Scottish drone, but what do you think about the Indian drone?

I love it, I think there's a big connection there. Those types of drones are very old, both in Scotland and in India, but the Indian version is more focused on the drone itself with that complete absence of melody, and more improvisation to supplement it. The timbre of tambura and sitar is beautiful, it's one of my favourite musical sounds.

It sounds like they're using E-bows on that, though, which is a cool combination. Metal string resonance on metal creates that buzzing sound, so the way that's cycled there made me think that there's an E-bow involved.

I understand they were just played naturally. Both Young and Zazeela belong to the minimalist school of music. Do you feel that with Sunn O))) and Khanate you are creating something similar with electric guitars?

In principle more than actual sound. Maybe more so in Sunn O))) through listening to Tony Conrad, who does some very aggressive minimalist stuff. The actual drone seems very flat, but the density of the sound is very important, that's something I'm really interested in. You can fill up space with one thing, but then you can really explore that to create this combination of tone, which ultimately creates the drone.

What physical reaction does your guitar drone technique have on your audience?

I think the first thing most people say is, 'It put me in a trance', or 'I started losing track of time and suddenly an hour was up', something like that. By listening to something that seems very basic you start focusing on detail, and it begins to start stripping away other things in your perception as well. It also affects the brain, especially modern logistical thought waves by calming down the brain and the nervous system, I incorporate that in my own playing because it has that effect on my body physiologically.

BLACK SABBATH "SWEET LEAF"

FROM MASTERS OF REALITY (ESSENTIAL) 1991

[Immediately] Well of course, it's Sabbath [laughs].

What's your favourite Black Sabbath album?

Sabbotage. It's the one where they are tweaked out of their minds, but haven't taken over the edge yet. This, though, is "Sweet Leaf", which is a high school anthem.

Were Sabbath the gateway for you as an aspiring young musician?

Maybe not directly. Probably the biggest influence for me to start playing was The Melvins, whose roots were in Sabbath. Anyway, Sabbath permeates much of my perspective on rock music. They're like the prototype of epic heavy music, as well as being responsible for playing electric guitar differently. Their music is also very minimalist, in the way that it strips away technicality and uses repetition. It's just the ugly root of it and people can identify with that.

EARTH "OUBOROUS IS BROKEN"

FROM EXTRA CAPSULAR EXTRACTION EP (SUB POP) 1991

[Without hesitation] It's "Ouborous Is Broken" by Earth. Joe Preston, who plays [bass guitar] on this record and programmed the drums, also played on the two Sunn O))) records. This is another record that influenced me from being young at that time, and it's managed to sustain a lot. Again this has a lot to do with minimalism, only now the guitar is completely stripped. This album features a drum machine, but on the following album [Earth 2] they even took that away, it was just pure guitar.

The album came out on Sub Pop and people thought that it was just a joke. I saw them play in 1990 as a duo, just guitar and bass, opening for this pop/punk band called Seaweed. The audience were just totally pissed off. There were a bunch of guys who wanted to mosh and Earth came out, sitting in chairs, playing super fucking slow. What! It was great. I think they were trying to be the antithesis of what was going down at the time in the hardcore scene.

[Guitarist/leader] Dylan [Carlson] told me that they were just slowing down Slayer riffs as slow as they could play them – while they still had some form. I think that's a great way to make a song [laughs]. I really like the drum programming on this. It's sort of wallopy, but really cheap sounding too. Joe Preston went on to do his solo project Thrones, which was an extension of this in a way. One guy playing solo bass, drum machine, synth and vocals. That's pretty minimal.

Kurt Cobain is playing guitar on this too.

There was a reissue of the Earth Live CD a few years ago, and they were marketing it using Kurt Cobain's name because it includes their demo where he's the vocalist. Thinking about it, that live recording is so ugly. It has very little to do with what Nirvana became.

BURZUM "DUNGEONS OF DARKNESS"

FROM BURZUM/MASSIVE (Misanthrope) 1992

[Strains to hear extremely muted Ambient sound rattling from speaker] I recognise the resonance. Who do you think is responsible?



It's "Dungeons Of Darkness" by [Norwegian Black Metalers] Burzum. Although the resonance sounds like it was recorded in a parking garage or something. What I find attractive about Burzum is that he [Count Grishnack, aka Varg Vikernes] was also using the drone with his guitar playing. He was creating these really repetitive, monotonous guitar pieces that were very drone like, especially on the later guitar albums. Instead of using long notes like Earth, he was packing together a lot of small notes to create these interesting instrumental passages. I think it's very evocative music. The ideology behind Black Metal is pretty simple, but the people who made the important records have sustained their musical vision, which is really interesting and different from anything else. Burzum are notorious because of Grishnack's church burning exploits – along with the fact that he stabbed Euronymous, the leader of rival Black Metal group Mayhem, to death. What do you think drove him to commit such nihilistic acts of destruction?

Just last week I was in Bergen with Khanate, and we were driving through this particular area. There was this Norwegian guy called Are with us and he turned round and said, 'We're in Burzum country right now. He burned one of these churches up here'.

[Grishnack's] idea was, I'm burning down this church because all of the Christian churches were built on top of the pagan holy sites. He was trying to make a symbolic statement of reclamation, and to do that he sacrificed his freedom. I think the murder story was more ging oriented.

Later Burzum albums were less Metal and more electronic Ambient. What do you think caused him to change direction?

One of the tracks on his fourth album [Filosofem] was a very simple repetitive keyboard line that was 25 minutes long. He was shooting for that level of regressing one's consciousness and entering into a state of meditation. I think that worked in his guitar music as well, but more in those early keyboard pieces. The later ones were more limited because he was in prison and had very little equipment to work with. He was aiming for psychological effect, both in his actions and in his music.

ABRUPTUM "OBSCURITATEM UDVOCO UMPLECTERE ME"

FROM OBSCURITATEM UDVOCO UMPLECTERE ME (SMEI) 1989

[After a couple of seconds] Carcass? No, it's

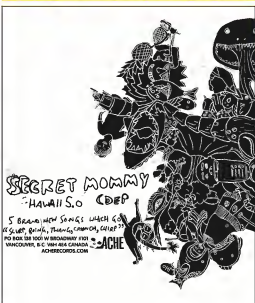
Abruptum.

Extra brownie points if you can name the album it's taken from.

Obscuritatem? I can't say the rest of it. De Profundis... No. This stuff is great. A lot of Black Metal fans are



**LEO RECORDS
NEW RELEASES**





This is a really early piece from 1980.

What I like about him is... Dissonance? No problem. Bang! Bang! Bang! Don't you feel that he's also allowing himself to be taken over by what he's playing? If you can get to that point, that's great. It's the apex of performance and playing. It's just happening. It's admirable. It's obvious this guy is a master of that. This is 1980? Wow!

I did some stuff with a piano soundboard last year that made me want to incorporate a pianist in Sunn O)))... Maybe just using those long strings as sound generators. I think our sound will always be centred around the sound of resonating metal strings.

SWANS "THE BEAUTIFUL DAYS"

FROM SOUNDTRACKS FOR THE BLIND (YOUNG GLOBE) 1999

[Almost immediately] is that Swans? It is Swans, you can tell by the melody. Is this early?

No, it's from a later Swans recording called *Soundtracks For The Blind*.

This is a great record because they incorporated a much more human element into their sound. Even on some of the quieter tracks it gets really oppressive in a certain way. There's a lot of depression on this album. Swans were masters of the overwhelming volume thing, they had their own PA. One of my goals is to talk Khanate into getting their own PA.

How important is the volume aspect in Sunn O)))'s music?

Volume turns sound into physical presence. The higher the volume, the stronger the waves come through the air with the sound pressure. Also, you can use the acoustics of the room to amplify your sound more. If there are people in that space then they're going to be affected differently, depending where they're standing.

Do you think it would be possible to levitate an audience by using sound waves?

If you had the right delivery device, there's probably a frequency that could produce a sheet of high pressure air. I think that's the trick. Sunn O))) are using guitar cabinets, but there's the whole study of infrasonic sound where they use large sheets of metal and concrete to create ultra-low frequencies. That actually has physical degenerative effects, but if you could somehow funnel those frequencies through an amplifier, in a way that controlled the air more, you could probably levitate people. You'd have to get it going before people entered, though, so they'd step on this stuff and just be walking on air. That would be awesome. ☐

very conservative about their music appreciation and this was free jazz to them. It was all improvised, and there is a legend behind the vocals. The main vocalist was this dwarf called IT who would wear corpse paint and the whole thing. The legend was that a microphone would be put in front of him and he would be electrocuted, burned and out in the studio for the vocals. I don't know if it's true. Apparently IT has dropped out of the band because of health problems [much laughter from all in room].

Abruptum's approach to Black Metal is more complicated in that the musicians are communicating at that exact moment in time to create an improvisation. They're paying attention to what the other person is doing. As raw as it might be, you can feel that they're doing that. There's some interplay, some conversation happening between the players. This is also generated in just one long 60 minute take. It occasionally dips down into some slower spaced out passages, but to retain that unflinching emotion and aggression is pretty impressive.

What do you think about the overall theatrical aspect of Black Metal?

It's very campy from the outside, but I feel that the reasoning behind the theatrics by these bands was very deliberate. They helped alter their mental state.

CURRENT NINETY THREE

"FAUST"

FROM *FAUST* (DUMMO) 2000

[Listens intently] That sounds really good. I'm not sure who it is, though.

It's Current 93 playing music for a story by Eric, Count Stenbock, called *Faust*. I guess the reason I'm playing this is to ask you about the ceremonial side of a Sunn O))) concert. Just how important are the robes, the candles and dry ice to the end result?

These things are very important. The difference between on stage playing heavy guitar music wearing street clothes, and doing it in the uniform of a medieval robe, with elements such as light and dry ice, is enormous. The group can operate as an entity or the sum of its parts, rather than just a bunch of people playing together. We use the robes very specifically - where they're not worn at all, except for five minutes before we play, and then they're taken off immediately after the performance. By wearing them we adopt an alternate identity, which helps to put our minds in a different state to evoke this beast of sound. They were used by Aleister Crowley in the same way, as a uniform to create a different being within yourself.

Do you feel that the sound you produce is some kind of invisible entity?

Definitely. There are a lot of other physical forces that

come with that sound. I like to think about it more mystically because it gives it a different weight. We're using guitars and amplifiers, so what can we pull out of this? What can the amplifier sew into the air? Or how can the sound envelop people?

How did you come into contact with vocalist Attila Cseh who now performs and records with Sunn O)))?

He was the vocalist on some old Black Metal albums that I was fond of, including Mayhem's *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas*, which is one of the landmark records of the whole scene. Greg and I had decided we were going to invite more collaborators to expand the edges of Sunn O))). I invited Attila and he really made the band a lot darker with his contribution to the [White 4] album. We had the chance of meeting and playing live with him in Vienna. He and Peter Rehberg [from Megalith] guested at the same gig, which included Greg and I, Rex Rator and Joe Preston. Having Joe Preston, Peter Rehberg and Attila Cseh perform together is, to me, some kind of miracle. But there's a thread running through them that makes sense too.

Peter and I were talking about releasing some of the live recordings we did together with Attila, but something happened to the master. Playing with Peter was really fun. I specifically remember during this soundcheck just hearing this thing like the PA was starting to melt [makes farthing and sparking sounds]. I looked over and he was standing behind the sound desk, hitting the keys of his laptop and getting really excited [laughs].

KEVIN DRUMM LAND OF LURCHES

FROM *LAND OF LURCHES* (SHANBON) 2003

[Immediately] Kevin Drumm?

He's another of the new breed of electronic Metal musicians. What do you think about his approach?

I had the pleasure of playing with him in Khanate recently and he was one of the most powerful electronic things I've seen. I think all these Negro guys really want to punish the crowd and cause a reaction. I really want him to get involved in Sunn O))) somehow too. He's got a really cool personality, and he's really into Black Metal, jazz and guitar music too. It's cool to talk to him about things and then see him perform. He's one of these people whose personality strikingly contrasts with the intensity of his music.

Cecil Taylor

"EB TAKE 2"

FROM *THE COMPLETE CANON RECORDINGS OF CECIL TAYLOR AND BUELL MCHAMBER* (MOSAIQ) 1989

Is this Cecil Taylor? I've recently been getting into this guy's music and it's just fantastic.



SUN KISSER

23 YEAR OLD PRODIGY DEVENDRA BANHART HAS LED A BEATNIK EXISTENCE, ARRIVING IN CALIFORNIA AFTER WANDERING IN FROM VENEZUELA SEVERAL YEARS AGO WITH A BOTTOMLESS CASSETTE OF MERCURIAL, WILL-O'-THE-WISP SONGS THAT CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF MICHAEL GIRA. NOW ENSCONCED AT THE HEART OF A BOHEMIAN FOLK SCENE IN SAN FRANCISCO THAT INCLUDES RENEGADES FROM MAZZY STAR AND MY BLOODY VALENTINE, BANHART HAS DELIVERED HIS FIRST 'PROPER' STUDIO OFFERING. WORDS: MARC MASTERS

"I have a high tolerance for painkillers, and the shit they give me is really not happening," since Devedro Banhart, spitting his words out through an aching mouth. While the wiry, warbling voice that graces Banhart's two albums of hand-crafted folk is beautifully strange, it's nearly normal compared to what he's saddled with on this mid-May morning, having endured oral surgery the previous afternoon. This is his third interview of the day, and his speech is a swarm of slurred syllables, strung between exasperated declarations of "Goddamn!" following each painful swallow. "Those motherfuckers, there's not even any codeine in this," he spits. "It's like fentanyl." Even worse, he has to board a plane to Europe in less than 24 hours, starting an international tour that will last well into July.

But endurance is a concept that Banhart, a normally ebullient 23-year-old who has spent most of his adulthood without a permanent residence, is familiar with. His second — and latest — album, *Rejoicing in The Hands*, was recorded during a marathon session of 12 consecutive ten-hour days. "It was very regimented. We would wake up around 9am, start recording at 10, and stop at 10pm," says Banhart. "We recorded the songs on *Rejoicing* in order, from day to night. And the album can be played live that. The songs go from sunrise to sunset." Banhart's first album, the stirringly primitive *Oh Me Oh My... The Way The Sun Goes By*, *The Setting Dogs Are Dreaming Lovesongs Of The Christmas Spirit*, was an amalgam of homemade recordings crafted on four tracks and answering machines that finally saw the light of day in 2002. Thus *Rejoicing* is technically his first studio album. But, as he explains, "I didn't record this in a studio. I recorded it in a house. [Engineer Lynn Bridges's] studio in Atlanta was flooded, so we recorded it in his living room."

"I hate recording studios, actually. I have humiliated myself a few times trying to record in studios," continues Banhart. "A studio is built to eliminate everything but the instruments, and I think in order to give the songs a sense of place, you need to include the birds and the wind and the sunrises and everything else that's happening."

Where *Rejoicing* truly differs from *Oh Me Oh My* is in its use of other musicians. After Banhart's voice and guitar were recorded in Atlanta, he returned to New York — his home at the time — to add overdubs from a variety of collaborators. These enhancements give Banhart's skeletal music underpinnings of depth, with parts growing organically out of the songs like mossy branches. "I would have one sound in my head for what I wanted the musicians to play, and I would say, 'OK, play this,' and I would sing it," he explains. "They would usually get it right the first time, and then I'd say, 'Now, try anything you want. Just freak out.' We usually kept the first version, but sometimes the freakout worked too."

"The only song that I felt pressure on was the one with Nadia Buryan," he adds. "I was very nervous about that." Buryan, a legendary British folk singer and Banhart's idol, sings an aching, nursery-like duet with him on the album's title track. "I recorded it and sent it to her, and she sang over that," he explains. "It's beautiful, her voice sounds like a flute. She stands up at one point and you can hear the wood in her chair creaking. I've known her for a long time. She's the reason I play live; I sent her my music

before I was playing in front of people and asked her if I should do it or not, and she said 'Do it.' This is the person I admire most musically, so it was really intense coming up with something that suited her."

Rejoicing in The Hands itself is deceptively intense — casual in feel yet meticulous in its musical detail and lyrical economy. Most impressive is the record's ability to recapture the aura of Banhart's debut, despite a very different sound. The tape hiss and background noise on *Oh Me Oh My* create a creepy space, and Banhart's songs are like a cinematic pan across his mental landscape, reminiscent of the psychological openness of Daniel Johnston's early tapes. *Rejoicing* sounds clearer and more pristine, replacing its predecessor's veridical style with an austere intimacy that offers equally direct access to Banhart's pulsing brain. "The recordings on *Oh Me Oh My* don't just capture the songs," he argues, "they document the creation of the songs, and the psychology I was experiencing at that exact moment. Some people would call that sketches, but I think it's more like a documentary. And I had to use whatever I had in front of me at the time. I clapped because I didn't have a drum set, and I double-tracked my voice because I didn't have a piano. *Rejoicing* is more like a film, more scripted. The songs lived with me and grew up and matured for a while before I recorded them."

The 10 tracks on *Rejoicing* are only half of what Banhart recorded in Atlanta; the rest will be released this autumn as *Niño Rojo*, a continuation of the sun myth he initiated on *Rejoicing*. "The first record represents the mother, the Golden Empress, which is the sun. *Niño Rojo* means red sun, and red son too," he expounds. "The son is more excited than the mother, so the lyrics are more exuberant. *Rejoicing* is mostly observations; sonically it's very calm. *Niño Rojo* is about a child off experiencing the world, and he has a lot more instruments in his songs."

Despite such a lofty conceptual framework, Banhart's songs are scintillatingly simple, and dead with aphoristic couplets and surreal jokes that are as roughly impulsive as they are cleverly literate. Examples abound on *Rejoicing*, from the plainly declarative "Will Is My Friend", a hymn to a pal who "sings like John Mayall", to the manifesto "A Sight To Behold", which celebrates Banhart's own artistic process — "It's a sight to behold/when you've got some old words to mould/and you can make them yours." "I have a difficult time writing narrative," he admits. "My lyric writing is cyclical, like a fly in a jar, or like someone walking into a wall, getting back up, walking into it again, and getting back up again. As opposed to someone walking straight down the street, though ironically I think I actually get somewhere while I'm spinning."

Born in Texas, Banhart grew up in Venezuela and Los Angeles. After attending art school in San Francisco ("that taught me what to watch out for and what not to do," he explains), he bounced between California and France, before moving to New York in 2001 at the behest of ex-Swan Michael Gira, now of Angels Of Light and proprietor of Young God Records. Gira was so impressed by Banhart's home recordings (sent to him by former God Is My Co-Pilot member Siobhan Duffy, who had bought a tape from Banhart for two dollars) that he released them untouched as *Oh Me*



Oh My on his Young God label. "Michael wrote me a ten-page letter and sent me an Angels Of Light record, and I knew Young God was the place for me," asserts Banhart. "I had imagined that the minute I got to New York, there'd be this kind of folk community. But that wasn't the case. And I certainly wanted nothing to do with anti-folk, cause I'm fucking pro-folk. But eventually things started to happen. I met Kevin Barker of Currituck Co., Mrs. Blotzie of White Magic, Diane Cluck, Cocorossi and Aliotta [of Antioch And The Johnsons], and things got really exciting. The minute I gave up on the thought that there might be some sort of community, that community emerged. It's like a gypsy — comes when you don't want it, leaves when you do."

Banhart's enthusiasm for his peers is evidenced by a sparkling compilation, *The Golden Apples Of The Sun*, which he curated for Beehive Records, a label run by the 21st-century countercultural/broadcast magazine, *Artchive*. The record's scope reaches far beyond the confines of New York, encompassing the sharp improvisations of Virginia's Jack Rose, the mythic folk of Philadelphia's Espers, and the acoustic psych of San Francisco's Sex Organs Of Admittance. "New York is really a revolving door, an unsteady place full of exciting distractions," exclaims Banhart, who has since moved to San Francisco. "California is where Mother Nature is a young woman, while in the East Coast she's an old lady. I like them both but am most attracted to the green below and the blue above of the West, not the grey of the East." Ever the nomad, Banhart plans to move to the south of France later this year, to join his girlfriend Bianca Casady of the aster-duo Cocorossi. "Her mom is a bullfighter, and she lives on the same land as The Gypsy Kings," says Banhart. "So it'll be cool to maybe learn flamenco and play along to my girlfriend's mom fighting a bull."

Some days later, speaking from his hotel room in Oslo, Norway a week into his tour, Banhart's voice has regained its clarity. "It's OK, I'm fine now," he affirms. "They don't have parkiders here, so I've just had to take the pain, but it's fine." His first performance of the trip was the most unlikely: a spot on the BBC TV show *Later With Jools Holland*, sandwiched between pop singers Aaliyah Monsette and Alicia Keys. While he was underwhelmed by the former, "Alicia was amazing," he exclaims. "We talked about early hip-hop and ponchos and Stevie Wonder. I was so into her music too. She was just amazing."

Asked how the rest of the tour has gone, he replies, "It's been really unbelievably good. Though I don't really know for sure, because I live in this state of kind of willful ignorance. Like when I see myself in a magazine, I'm sure it's not me. Or when I look in the mirror, I'm sure that's not me. It's a natural instinct that I think is a healthy way to look at things. So I don't know if the shows have been good, but I think they have."

Banhart's live persona does seem somewhat distant and out of body. He sits cross-legged onstage, playing with a rambling, unrelaxed looseness, often altering songs radically as if directed by some higher power. "When I first started playing I would sit on chairs and always fall off at some point. So I decided I like to have my ass on the earth," he laughs. "I change the songs to match how I'm feeling. It's like painting: you paint your paintings alone, and then you're expected to paint the same painting for a bunch of people. It's

going to come out different. It would be so boring if I had to do the same goddamned thing every time." A stunning example of this restless elasticity is the version of Oh My on his "Michigan State" that Banhart performed on California radio station KCRW in May. On record, the song is an eerie ode to a daydreamed future residence, but on KCRW it became a rambling standup routine, with Banhart belting out the lyrics like a postmodern Tiny Tim. "It was early in the morning, and there's no audience in front of you there, so I was imagining these squares drinking coffee in the morning and shit," he smiles. "And I just reacted to that." Such button-down experiences are a long way off from Banhart's original intention into live performance years ago. "I was invited to play a wedding for my roommates Bob the Crisped Comed, who is called that because he is cripped and is a comedian for a living, and Jerry Exits, who is an Elvis impersonator," he recalls. "And they asked me to play 'How Great Thou Art' and 'Love Me Tender.' I didn't sleep for three days before it happened. I was so nervous. It went well, but I have no idea why I kept playing after that."

In Europe, Banhart has been accompanied by his friend Andy Cabic, playing *Rejoicing In The Hands* from start to finish, followed by songs he's written with Cabic and a cache of covers by artists ranging from Neil Young to Gordon Lightfoot to Sheila E. Cabic is the leader of *Rejoice*, a California group that includes Banhart as well as Hope Sandoval of Mazzy Star and Colin O'Connell of My Bloody Valentine, and has recently released a self-titled debut of subtle old-school folk. "Andy is a genius, the best songwriter in the world," declares Banhart. "We started playing together because I used to work at the Castro Theatre in San Francisco. One night they were showing *Benjamin Smoke*, which is my favourite documentary of all time [about legendary American fringe musician Benjamin]. Afterwards Andy played me his song 'Further On', and it was unbelievable. I had never heard a song that good from another living human being. Soon after that we started playing every day."

"We've written a lot of songs together," he continues. "Some aren't appropriate for my records or his, so we have all these little side projects that no one's ever heard. One of them is inspired by Dominguo, Caetano Veloso and Gal Costa's first record. We're hoping to get Arto Lindsay to find us a studio in Bahia, and record that in Portuguese and Spanish. We've got a bunch of other projects too. One of them is called Marc Bolan's Best Friend Jimi Hendrix Featuring Michael Jackson."

Banhart's awareness of and obsession with his antecedents organically informs every part of his work. His music is so drenched in the past, yet so of the moment, that it feels like an anachronism turned into a David Cronenberg prop: throbbing and wheezing with transformed history, sprouting sticky wings made of yellowing paper. This seem bursting knowledge is especially evident in his singing, a curious yowl recalling old bluesmen, carnival callers, movie gangsters and even cartoon characters. His voice seems to span epochs within single notes, creaking with age and cracking from youth. "After my first tour," he says, "I realized that if I don't sing with my most natural, comfortable voice, if it doesn't come from a pure and honest place, it will kill me and do what I'm doing, because it's just me and the guitar every night

for months and months. So if I put up some sort of facade, it will just kill me. I was really young when I recorded Oh My On Me, and my voice was still cracking, and it still does."

As a child in Venezuela, Banhart's voice was his first musical instrument. "I had a friend who had two drumsticks and he banged them on some clay pots, and I just sang along. When I was nine I wrote my first song, 'We're All Going To Die,' about plastic surgery," he deadpans. "Venezuela has the highest rate of plastic surgery in the whole world. It's cheap there, like five bucks a session. We even gave our Schnauzer dog plastic surgery to make it look like my grandmother, because it's a status thing for the family to all look alike. So I wrote a song about how we're all gonna die getting plastic surgery."

"The music I remember hearing when I was growing up was Alan Lus Guerni And 440, IMF's 'Unbelievable', Curtis Brooks's 'Bury The Hatchet', and the Milli Vanilli record, which I memorised completely," continues Banhart. "I didn't start researching music and putting effort into finding records until I was about 14 or 15, when my dad went to a record store during a trip to London. He said, 'My son likes acoustic music,' and the guy at the record store said, 'I'll like Nick Drake.' So my dad bought me that, but when I opened it, it was actually a Radiohead CD. I thought, 'This is OK, but I really want to find that Nick Drake CD.' And that began this quest for finding stuff."

The quest to play guitar came much later, inspired by opposite sources. "I really started playing guitar because of this hatred for The Eagles," he says. "I hate that band. And I hate Jimmy Hager and Van Halen and all that bullshit. I knew that that kind of playing took chops, so the only conscious thing I did with my guitar playing was to stay away from that. I'm still learning. My favourite guitar player is Kevin Barker [of Currituck Co.], and I really like Jack Rose, Ben Chasny [of Sex Organs Of Admittance], Robbie Basho and John Fahey. One song on *Rejoicing*, the delicately picked 'The Smoking In The Temple Of Artisan Mimicry', reveals both how far Banhart's playing has come and how far he feels it can still go. "It's a homage to John Fahey and Garret Hedderly," he admits. "They are in the true Temple of Artistry — I'm simply singing their praise in mimicry."

Not content to restrict his obsessions to folk-based influences, Banhart leans on getting distracted by a myriad of sources. "Latey, I've unintentionally been listening to a lot of hip-hop," he confesses. "The wire is the highest form of folk music. It's political, it speaks to the people and it's by the people. And it takes from the best things about music and still makes it completely its own. So in the future I definitely want to write reggae songs. There's one song on *Alto Rio* that represents that, it's called 'Be Kind', and it's going to come out as a single in August before the record comes out."

That he remains so spellbound by the music that inspires him is perhaps what makes Banhart's own rocky strain of history laden, parent tense folk so exciting. "I don't mean if I never sing again or write again, play guitar again or, as long as I can still listen to that music," concludes Banhart. "It's like what John Fahey said, as told to me by No-Nick Blues Band from when they toured with him. They were all sitting around one day, and he said, 'What is all this shit people say about what God is? Don't they know? Music is God.' □ *Rejoicing In The Hands* is out now on XL (Europe) and Young God (USA). *Never is out on* DiChristina Star Builders



THIRD
BANGOR WAY

ALL STRUNG OUT

AFTER 20 YEARS EXPLORING THE RICH, STRANGE TIMBRES OF HER SELF-MADE LONG STRING INSTRUMENT, MEMPHIS-RAISED COMPOSER ELLEN LEULMAN HAS MADE A STUNNING SONG ALBUM RESONANT OF THE VELVET UNDERGROUND'S NEW YORK AND AMERICA'S FOLK-BLUES HINTERLAND
WORDS: JULIAN COWLEY
PHOTOS: ROBERT GALLAGHER



*I was walkin' down the street
with my suitcase in my hand
when the buildings leaned in
all the buildings leaned in.
And glittering glass
was like jewels
strewn on the street
as accidental melodies ring out
under our feet*
Ellen Fullman, "Glittering Glass" from *Ort* (2004)

The heat and glint of Brooklyn streets radiate from words intoned over a muscular riff. Rippling with New York self-assurance, it faithfully tracks the spirit of *The Velvet Underground*. Yet the instruments on "Glittering Glass" are played by Jörg Hiller, aka Konrad Sprenger, Berlin-based composer, producer, DJ, instrument builder, arranger and recording engineer. And the voice, twanging with the residue of America's Deep South, belongs to Ellen Fullman, a composer and performer who was raised in Memphis and kissed on the hand by Elvis Presley when she was one.

Fullman is best known for her invention in 1980 of the Long String Instrument (LSI), a set of vibrating strings ranging in length from 13 to 30 metres, tuned in just intonation, attached to wooden resonators and played with rosin-coated fingers or specially made bowing devices. She has for years devoted her creative energies to refining the design and tuning of this instrument, painstakingly installing it in a variety of venues to bring them alive as sounding spaces, charging the air with scintillating, shapeshifting clouds of overtones.

Now with the remarkable album *Ort*, released by Hiller's Choose Records and credited to Fullman and Konrad Sprenger, Fullman has broken into song. "Glittering Glass" is followed immediately by a haunting rendition of Woody Guthrie's migrant worker ballad "I Ain't Got No Home". A galloping version of AP Carter's haunting song "John Hardy" also sits comfortably alongside seven inspired and singular originals.

"In 2000, I received a grant to live and work in Berlin for one year," she explains. "Composer Arnold Dreyblatt introduced me to Jörg Hiller. Arnold had always wanted to record 'I Ain't Got No Home' and suggested we all do this as a project together. I began practicing the song and invited Jörg to the studio to work with me. I'd recorded the chord progression with an Afro-Cuban syncopation. Jörg said, 'No, no, it should be more flat, just back and forth, like this.' I knew it was going to be a special collaboration when he started playing my Long String Instrument and it sounded just right. Not only was his instinct correct in how the rhythm should go, but he sounded good on my instrument. From the very first moment, I've experienced continuous and remarkable depth of trust and shared aesthetic with Jörg. Arnold's direct participation never actually worked out, but his spirit was felt."

Formerly a student of Pauline Oliveros, La Monte Young and Alvin Lucier, Dreyblatt had a formative role in Fullman's musical development. "When I first moved to New York in 1981," she remembers, "he invited me to his studio and demonstrated all of his instruments, the midsize upright pianoforte, the portable pipe organ. His work was so appealing to me – really good sounding instruments, quirky tuning and original musical structure. His studio was like a laboratory, with instrument parts spread around. This visit made it clear to me what I wanted to do. My long

string thing at the time was screechy and untuned. Through Arno, I learned all about the New York music scene."

But it's Fullman's songwriting abilities that figure in Dreyfuss's own recollection of their initial encounters. "We spent a lot of time talking about tuning systems and instrument building," he affirms. "But I've never forgotten her early songs, which were put aside as she gradually devoted herself obsessively to her unusual instrument." 20 years later, in Berlin, Dreyfuss instigated *Orf* (German for Place). Having collaborated in various projects with Jörg over a number of years, I had the feeling they would make an interesting combination," he says. "Jörg not only was familiar with early minimalism, but was getting into raw American Country through the Harry Smith documentary recordings. When he suggested a recording project with Ellen's instrument, I figured the time was right to bring back that haunting Memphis voice and those unforgettable lyrics in collaboration with her instrument, backed up by Hilfer's recording genius and instrumentation. Ellen asked me to play on the record, I didn't have time to make the sessions, but I suggested that she record "I Ain't Got No Home" along with some of her own pieces. I had an idea in the early 80s for a recording project with that wonderful tune which was never realised. It was perfect for this situation."

Hilfer visited Fullman's studio and they recorded the Woody Guthrie song in a single afternoon. "I was able to play the LSI for the first time and was amazed by the variety of sounds I was able to achieve by just moving my fingers," says Hilfer. "When Ellen had to go back to Seattle we decided that she would send me recordings and she said I could record whatever I wanted over her material. I made several attempts but it felt too impersonal. It was important for me to see her reaction while I played."

One CD that reached Fullman contained the instrumental basis for "John Hardy," Hilfer's personal choice of material. "I returned the instrumentals by changing the speed in ProTools to get a key that worked for me," Fullman explains. "I talk back at the bottom of my range, really an open-mouthed whisper. I invited my friend Jessica Kenny over to sing it with me. She has a beautiful voice, she has studied and performed a lot in Indonesia – and had performed "John Hardy" busking on the street." Last year Fullman managed to return to Berlin to complete the project, weaving the "private thread" of her songwriting into a beautifully crafted fabric.

The signature harmonic richness and glorious overtone shimmer of Fullman's Long String Instrument can be experienced on *Body Music* (XJ 1993) and *Change Of Direction* (New Albany 1998). The LSI heard on *Orf* is a mid-version, encompassing just the upper cello range. "This was the size of my studio in Berlin," she says. "Something about the song format gave me permission to do some things I might feel silly about in a performance – like using this gypsy-indebted instrument to imitate the sound of a horn. I loved Delta blues music as a teenager in Memphis and was able to see some of the originals perform. I saw Rury Lewis a lot at a bar called Peonies. My favourite experience was seeing Little Laura Dukes. She was tiny, had a little girl voice sometimes and sometimes a big rough voice. I was not attracted to her curvy text and unusual emphasis in melody like 'Sittin' on the outside, wor RIED AND BROKE HEARTED so, I WOULD nATHUR be A rabbit, h-DIN IN A GRO-UND HOAG'S HO-ole. I love

working with the shapes of words in my mouth."

More recently Fullman has been listening enthusiastically to the alternative Country songs of Lucinda Williams. "I would say that hearing her music gave me permission to use my accent, musically," she says. "While singing, it is impossible for me to cover up my southern accent so I've cultivated the persona of my music." During the mid-1990s, while she was living in Austin, Texas, Fullman studied vocal technique with North Indian classical singer Anita Slawek. "I learned that singing just one note could be engaging and musical," she observes. "The shape; how it starts and ends. And when Anita sang in class, sometimes I was moved to tears by the sheer beauty of one very specifically tuned and shaped note followed by another. Anita said, 'When you are really in tune, the music plays itself.'"

Such insights have added crucial impetus to Fullman's development of the LSI. Her formal training at Kansas City Art Institute during the late 1970s, was in sculpture and ceramics. "My background has given me a tactile approach to music," she says. "For me, it's more about the sound of it, the resonance, than about ideas."

Another vital mentor is composer and Deep Listening pioneer Pauline Oliveros, who met Fullman at a time when her sculptural investigations were gravitating towards sound art. "I met Ellen in 1980 at the New Music America festival in Minneapolis," Oliveros remembers. "She was wearing a pleated metal skirt with wires that were attached to her ankles so that when she walked along, the strings were plucked and sounding. She called the piece *Street Walker*. I have been watching and listening to the development of her Long String Instrument for 24 years. With very strong determination she has created the instrument, learned to tune it, play it, compose music for it and teach others how to play it. It's a remarkable accomplishment. Others who are engaging in long string type instruments have benefited from her model immensely."

"I had no formal education in music," continues Fullman. "Pauline has always been very generous to me with her time and attention." In 1994 Fullman and her LSI collaborators Elise Gould and Nigel Jacobs performed and recorded with Oliveros and Deep Listening Band (with Stuart Dempster and David Ganser). Fullman's piece *Texas/Travel/Texture* and Oliveros's *Epigraphs in The Time Of AIDS* were issued on *Suspended Music* (Penlun). "I had been exploring ways to expand the vocabulary of sound production on my instrument," Fullman recalls. "I codified these into a system, with names and notation symbols. My intention was to use all of these textural variations in one piece. I composed *Texas/Travel/Texture* as an underlying fabric for a structured improvisation by Deep Listening Band. I tuned the LSI to Pauline's accordion, a scale that uses pure sevenths, which sound flatter than is equal temperament. This was my first experience integrating traditional instruments with the LSI, and in Pauline's composition my first time to improvise – both important new directions for me."

After studying Indian music with Anita Slawek, Fullman decided that the warmer tone of bronze strings would best suit the LSI, and she was aware that her tuning had improved. Working with Oliveros was a comparably educative experience, affecting Fullman's current understanding of tuning. "I imagine regulated air flowing across brass accordion reeds to

help myself make the adjustments to get the sound I am looking for," she explains. "Small adjustments allow the strings to speak more clearly." Performers on the LSI walk between groups of long strings. "The walking and playing is like surfing through the overtones, working with the forces of nature to bring out what is already there," she continues. "In composing, I am searching for pitch combinations and sequences that do interesting things in the interactions of their overtones. The more precisely tuned my instrument is, the more one can hear clarity in the overtone combinations."

The unquestionable originality of Fullman's work has, paradoxically, been shaped and sustained by her interest in creative precursors and her openness to instructive encounters. Harry Partch's hugely imaginative instrument building and microtonal adventures have proved a valuable touchstone. "Without Harry Partch I would have never taken the direction I have taken," she says. "It all goes back to him. I was not attracted to the sound of his music, however, until more recently. I was able to see replicas of the instruments for the first time in a performance at Mills College by guitarist John Schneider. He is a real scholar and exquisite performer. And here again, the perfectly tuned and complex intervals brought tears to my eyes."

Underlying Fullman's engagement with Indian singing was her deep appreciation of Terry Riley's music. 20 years ago they performed separately at New Music America. "He referred to me as 'The long string lady,'" she smiles. "I really liked that. When a piece with The Kronos Quartet was commissioned from Fullman for the Other Miles Festival in San Francisco in 2002 she followed Kronos violinist David Harrington's suggestion to draw creatively upon Gesa Wille's Delta blues song 'Last Kind Words'. And the music Riley had written for the quartet proved an important and helpful model."

The original impulse for her to explore long strings came from exposure to Alvin Lucier's monochordal classic *Musica On A Long Thin Wire* (1979). Another important influence was the undated minimalism of Phil Niblock. In 1963, in New York, Fullman met Dutch artist and musician Paul Panhuysen who was performing at Niblock's Experimental Intermedia Foundation and visited her Longitudinal Vibration Installation at the Terminal NY Show in Brooklyn. The previous year Panhuysen had initiated his own series of long string experiments with John Goetsch, "so there was a ready audience." Paul gave me my first European gig," Fullman recalls. "He invited me to be in Echo, his sound art festival in Endhoven, produced my first LP, *The Long String Instrument* (Apollo 1985) and organised other gigs for me in Europe."

Less predictable was Fullman's association with the rock group Pat Dog Pondering. She makes a guest appearance on their 1992 album *Volo Volo* (Columbia). "I met multi-instrumentalist Frank Orff and the other members of Pat Dog when we all were living in Austin," she says. "Frank is wildly enthusiastic, creative and playful. The most fun was on stage with them in Chicago. I installed my instrument up on a two-metre high extend ladder along the back wall of the stage. The show opened with a scrim covering the stage. A guy with a potted soil walked along behind me from down on the floor, projecting a huge shadow of me, walking back and forth, onto the scrim. It was fun playing power chords with a rock band and the audience screamed."

While living in Seattle, around 2000, Fullman found a

Male impersonator Ellen Fullman in Jörg Heiser's drag Fullman and her Long String Instrument (below)

context for the LSI among improvising musicians. At one especially successful session, these included visiting saxophonist John Butcher and percussionist Cino Robair. "A leap in my musical practice came during this time," she affirms. "I really needed to become skilled with control over dynamic shapes in order to play with other musicians, otherwise the LSI would just steamroll over everything. I asked myself, what might happen if I really practised for several hours every day? Could the quality of sound go places I couldn't imagine? After all, this is a new instrument with no method or tradition. I would play the same chord for a couple of hours, like grinding away at something. And it changed. I discovered a rounder timbre."

The evolution of the LSI continues. Characteristically Fullman recognises the creative success of *Ort* as a transitional moment, one more node on the long string of her development as an artist. "The LSI was the original tonal/textural impulse for almost all the songs on *Ort*," she declares. "Although the song format may make my tuning ideas seem more accessible, several of these songs are studies for new directions." One example is "Bottle Glass", a song based on the Indian raga Vohas and featuring Fullman's voice in combination with the LSI and a sine tone. "The disturbing quality is achieved through never playing the root of the chord that my singing is based on," she observes. "If a drone is played over this track, it sounds like I am going swimming. Without it, it sounds like my intention is to commit suicide by drowning. I'm interested in exploring controlled dissonance."

Fullman has now relocated to California where she draws support from the San Francisco Bay Area's thriving scenes – "The tuning theory scene, the Improv scene, the artist-made instrument scene, the West Coast American tonal composers scene," she identifies. "There seems to be a productive relationship between art and technology here that I hope to take advantage of. I've been invited by the Exploratorium – San Francisco's museum of science, art and human perception – to develop an exhibit based on the Long String Instrument. I'm always stimulated when keeping company with creative engineers. I hope to develop my instrument further and gain technical insights into the properties of the longitudinal mode of vibration."

Fullman is currently preparing a multimedia performance/installation collaboration called *Isolated Reflections*, which premieres in Seattle on 29-31 July at Consolidated Works. "The piece will be constructed using multiple installations of the LSI placed in a large-scale environment," she explains. "Each will be tuned in a system that is in a pure but complex harmonic relationship to one another. I want the audience to experience sounds in the distance that seem to accidentally coincide with sounds nearby."

Meanwhile, Seattle's Anomalous Records have just released *Straggled Stasis*, a CD of previously unreleased material from the mid-1980s that offers further opportunity to experience unloyed the seductive fullness of Fullman's Long String Instrument. "Each piece is a study on a very fundamental harmonic structure, an observation of the events that occur as played out by this instrument," remarks Fullman. "I enjoy the austerity of these recordings, hearing the complexity of overtone production, especially the repetition of the glissando sweep when approaching and departing from the bridge of the soundboard." □ *Ort* is out now on Chase



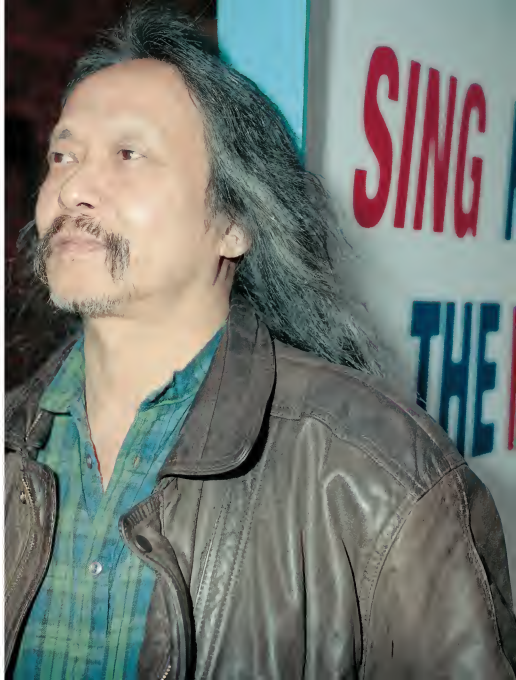


THE ACCIDENTAL ANARCHIST

FORMER CAN SINGER **DAMO SUZUKI** HAS BEEN PERFECTING HIS UNIQUE MODE OF INSTANT COMPOSITION ALL HIS LIFE. HAVING SURVIVED A NEAR FATAL ILLNESS, A SPELL AS A JEWOWAH'S WITNESS AND A SLAYMAN'S DAILY GRIND, HE HAS EMBARKED ON A NEVER-ENDING TOUR, NOMADICALLY PERFORMING ALL OVER THE WORLD WITH HIS DAMO SUZUKI NETWORK CONSTANTLY RECONFIGURED FROM LOCAL MUSICIANS IN ORDER TO AVOID BECOMING JUST ANOTHER MUSICAL TOURIST. WORDS: MIKE BARNES
PHOTOS: THOMAS BUTLER







"I'm an anarchist," says Domo Suzuki. "I don't believe in any kind of politician and I'm not so interested in economic things and materialism, so it's my dream to continue this so that people get a feeling that brings them much more together. But I don't like to be a leader – you must believe this – and if someone tries to be a leader there is no anarchy."

If not as a leader, then Domo Suzuki, currently embarked on his Never Ending Tour, can claim to be at least an initiator or catalyst. A spell as vocalist with Can during a brief but extremely fertile period in the group's history from 1970-73 sealed Suzuki's status as a legendary figure, but even then he was essentially coasting what he says since he was a teenage busker; improvise, make "instant compositions." This is clearly his life's work – his calling. His recent collaborations are manifold. He has played in a duo with Magic Band guitarist Gary Lucas after the two met in Germany and the USA, and he has also toured both the US and Europe with post-rockers Cul De Sac. He makes a cameo appearance on a new record by Canadian Hip-hop instrumentalist Settee (see *The Wire* 244). In Japan earlier this year, he performed with Ghost and Acid Mothers Temple, lesser known groups like the Mondrains, Mandag and Uptight and various experimentalists including Jonathan La Master from Cul De Sac, a number of Korean musicians and even bass guitarist Itaru Yamochi, who was Ronnie Lane's replacement in The Faces and in the final phase of 70s rockers Free.

Back in the 70s the lithe, long haired Suzuki held a sort of homocentric teenybop allure for teenage Can enthusiasts John Cope, who was drawn to his "erotic carefree Devotional" at the microphone. As he writes in his book *Krautrock Sampler*, "In Domo Suzuki, Can had found their bugaboo hero. For Domo possessed a wilderness in his voice which was a very touching pop delivery, like David Cassidy's a thrilling teenage lit that made me understand why my girlfriends needed their Donny [Diamonds], David [Bowies] and Marc [Bolton]. I had a huge crush on Domo Suzuki, and still do." Though Suzuki hasn't read Cope's book, he is amused, but somewhat nonplussed to learn about this piece of fanmail. "Maybe in a way it might be sexy," he muses, "but in this respect I'd like to talk about a sexy girl much more."

"I wasn't really thinking about many things," he continues. "I was part of the band, but actually not really part of The Can, because for me it didn't matter. It's just something that happens, because I was just a hippy – I didn't really have any kind of opinions." Opinions or not, shortly before he left the group, his sweet, yearning vocal harkens on the marquee, nine minute "Future Days" helped shape an atmosphere of ineffable beauty that to many represents Can at ex-celsis.

"I tell you... it was really f.a.n.t.a.s.t.i.c. I came home with much happiness and motivation for future project. Hey, we can all get these positive energy together and walk to front, stop by stores for better world. This is the reason I start NEVER ENDING TOUR. It will start in January 2004, two months earlier than planned. I would like to see you and make smile on your face everywhere in the world!"

Domo Suzuki, January 2004

Of all the press releases that habitually fall into a journalist's inbox, those sent in by Domo Suzuki have

been so full of enthusiasm, they immediately make you want to get up, out and do something. The Never Ending Tour is an intriguing venture, not least because you wouldn't expect a musician in his fifties to be so fired up at the prospect of such a peripatetic lifestyle, let alone one who, a decade ago, very nearly died from a serious illness. Not only that, he even decided to start up the tour early. When I meet the vocalist on holiday in London with his youngest son Marco, I am interested in finding out more about this venture. Borrowing the unofficial banner flapping Bob Dylan's ceaseless roadwork, Never Ending Tour is a snappy title for a long outing on the road. Are the dates likely to take up the whole year?

"No, the whole of my life," Suzuki corrects. "This is my mission. I like to meet young musicians everywhere in the world. I'm not going to make music forever, so they continue to play instant composing when I die, it will be good. So that's why it's called the Never Ending Tour. I like to get much more communication in the world and you can make communication with instant composing – improvised music – more than any kind of composed music."

Although he says he doesn't really follow the contemporary Japanese underground scene, I wonder whether he feels a deeper affinity with Japanese groups due to a shared heritage. He is unable, perhaps unwilling, to differentiate on geographical and cultural terms. Indeed, one feels, after spending some time with Suzuki, that he would just as happily – perhaps happiest – performing with a group of musicians assembled in an ad hoc manner. This is largely what he does on the Never Ending Tour, with his group Network almost constantly in flux. It's a strictly non-hierarchical set-up with Suzuki, in his own words, taking his place in the 'middle' of the group, and most nights he plays with a completely new set of musicians – or "sound carriers", as he likes to call them – at each venue. More often than not, he has never met them before, never mind played with them.

Suzuki's voice has strengthened with age and his vocals run from soulful, spontaneous melodic lines to whispers, growls and howls. In his presence, his fellow musicians (on the evidence of the (exclusively live) Network CDs released so far, his fellow musicians understandably tend to fall in behind him. But he is prepared to pitch in with whatever they come up with. At one Russian show, for example, he was accompanied by a brass ensemble including bass saxophone and tuba. In Melbourne he played with Husbands, whose line-up featured eight guitarists, two drummers and a bass guitarist. They spontaneously asked me because they thought the music they create, only Domo can sing," Suzuki recalls.

Although wary of making geographical distinctions, he does recognise certain general preferences in how musicians from different continents respond to his instant composing principle. "If I play in France or Italy they play much more experimental music," Suzuki explains. "In England people like to play much more rock music and so on. If I play in New York, people like to play much more jazz. But I just don't like to make any kind of a category."

Suzuki's modus operandi must present considerable organisational difficulties. "No. Actually, it's not that hard work," he counters. "Now we are living in the information age and have the Internet, many musicians write me emails saying they would like to play. I have some kind of sound carriers list. When I go to different

cities and someone is picking me up, I know them already as a friend. And on the other hand also, booking agents or owners of the venue, they like to select local musicians."

In fact, Suzuki proved just how easy all this can be. When we met, as soon as I mentioned in passing that I play drums, he immediately insisted that I appear with Network the next time he played in London. With the greatest respect to him, any musician who has had even the most peripheral brush with the music business will have had similar offers scores of times, but it is rare for anything to come of it. I thought little more of it until I received an email in May, which read:

"Mike, hope you're well. As I promised I would like to invite you as drummer of NETWORK on 14 July 2004 at BULL & GATE. Of course you can invite some of your sound carriers (= musicians) you know." Poken taken.

Does he ever find that his idiosyncratic approach to live music can prove problematic? "No, always good. It's quite a stupid answer but it's true," he says, laughing. "Between the musicians on the stage there is some kind of magnetic field developed during a concert," he explains, "and we are getting tight together and it's really a natural way we are making our music. The people like it and the most beautiful thing is that after the concert everybody is smiling. Then I feel like 'Oh, I did it', then I have this happiness in my life and it's also motivation to read concert. It's a kind of luxury for me," he concludes with a smile, aware that to most people, his lifestyle would be viewed as anything but.

Although Suzuki admits that some people tell him he is travelling too hard, his appetite for staying late is night on insatiable. "Some times I play eight hours – eight hours of improvised music," he says laughing. "Actually my dream is every day concerts – or maybe 300 days in a year. If there is a possibility – because I really like to travel. There are no handicaps about this, so I really like to visit new cities – everywhere is actually quite beautiful – so there's no ugly places. People instead are ugly everywhere, the people that destroy."

"Sometimes it happens to me the remarkable things, like the last time I played in Liverpool," he continues. "We would stop the music at 11 o'clock. But some of the audience like to hear more. The musicians I played with had a rehearsing room, so we – and about 40 people from the audience – went to the rehearsing room and made an 'aftershow stop' until three o'clock in the morning. Of course, no entrance charge. It sounds exhausting. Doesn't he ever get tired? No. Why?" he answers, puzzled. "Because every day I get new things."

The extraordinary energy Suzuki brings to his music making, his motivation and the pleasure he derives from these performances can be traced back to the time he was critically ill with cancer in 1983. For any chance of survival he had to undergo a series of operations. "I weighed at times only 28 kilograms," he shudders. At the time he was a Jehovah's Witness and refused a potentially lifesaving blood transfusion on religious grounds. He was told that refusal would reduce his chance of survival to about 30 per cent. He refused anyway but somehow survived.

At this point he had retired from performing music for a decade, but the experience swung him right back into it. "Every day, every second you are living is really, really important," insists Suzuki. "More so than before, much more intense. So I really wanted to make music again. I had an energy at the time that I wanted

at their places, even some give me pocket money, food and drink. I've lived in Germany for 34 years and it's getting worse. People here were much more friendly and looked happier than they do today."

The moment when Suzuki joined Can has entered the realm of rock legend. The group's original singer Malcolm Mooney had quit in late 69, and in May 70 the group were about to commence a residency at a Munich club called the Blow Up. The loss of their vocalist had put the brakes on the group's creativity and they were on the lookout for a similarly inspiring, catalytic replacement. On the afternoon of the concert, bassist Holger Czukay chanced upon Suzuki in the street behind his improvised music and invited him to appear with the group that same evening. According to Czukay, after a "concentrated" start, Suzuki's fierce vocal outbursts prompted a fight and a walkout, leaving only about 60 defiant fans to see out the show. "It was beautiful, a very good concert," Czukay concluded.

From someone with few musical ambitions, Suzuki suddenly found himself fronting one of the German underground rock scene's highest profile groups. Whereas Mooney's vocal style had been agitated and edgy, Suzuki's singing was strong yet subtle and uncertain. With their new singer at the helm, Can subtly shifted their sound into a less aggressive, more rhythmically cyclical direction and, in doing so, produced some of the most original and enduring music from the early 1970s on the albums *Tago Mago* (1971), *Ego Barmyase* (1972) and *Future Days* (1973). Even aficionados have to occasionally remind themselves that Can were essentially an improvising group. But they edited and reconfigured their lengthy spontaneous workouts into such sublime songs as "I'm So Green," "One More Night," "Moonshake" and "Spoon," which made the German number one slot in 1972. Suzuki confirms that during his time with the group they did indeed rehearse every day, with Holger Czukay recording hundreds of hours of music that never been released. In *The Wire* 15B, Rob Young was shown the massive stack of reel tapes still stored in the group's former studio, Inner Space, and described his feelings thus: "This, as any Can fan will tell you, is marginally more exciting than finding the lost Ark of the Covenant in a garden shed."

Suzuki doesn't quite see it that way. "There must be a lot of material," he speculates. "That's why Holger is using a lot of old material for his concerts. He is reminding things. But better not to listen to such old music any more," he concludes, laughing. Even with such an unsentimental attitude towards his former group, he has been known to burst into spontaneous versions of old Can songs like "Mother Sky." And he is not at all surprised that they have continued to be so influential. "The members of Can came from different kinds of music fields," he explains, "and they were trying to make something new. Whereas most groups came from rock music, Immi Schmitt was already a conductor, Holger studied with Stockhausen and Jaki (Jaki Jaki) was a free jazz musician, and only Michael Karas played a little bit of rock music. It just came from different kinds of musical fields. That's why we could make such a kind of sound."

A piece of laterday Can fandom resulted in Suzuki being "immortalised" by Mark E. Smith in *The Fall*'s "Am Damo Suzuki", from the 1995 album *This Nation's Saving Grace*. What does he think of this tribute? "When I first heard that song I thought there must be

someone else called Damo Suzuki," he replies. "I never thought someone would make a song for me. I met Mark E. Smith twice after that time, when I was playing as Damo Suzuki Band. And that piece was really great. He also made a cover version of "Oh Yeah" (from *Tago Mago*) but in their own style." With the kind of misadventure he had back in 1973, it's really no wonder that Suzuki left Can and gave up music completely for ten years. During that period he took a number of jobs, including working in a hotel, raised a family, and, until two years ago, held down a "normal job" for a Japanese company. He was, he claims, perfectly happy not making music and didn't miss it at all.

"I was really never interested to be a rock singer or a rock star, so I left Can," he declares. "I learnt quite a lot of things from the life outside music. It's much more interesting than to be in showbusiness, and today I like the kind of musicians who make music with their experience, their life experience. It was a good time, sometimes really bad but mostly really good, because I learnt many things doing something completely different from music."

A year after recovering from the illness that nearly killed him in 1983, he joined a group called Dunkelziffer for a time, before forming Damo Suzuki's Network, the template for most of his current musical activity. "All things are changing with me since the middle of the 80s," he says. "Not always geographically, but in my person also. If you make any kind of experiences, then you are getting much more rich with the spiritual things. I like to be rich only with these things, not material things."

To add to his pleasure, he thinks that younger musicians today have more empathy with the idea of instant composition than their predecessors did in the 60s and 70s, mainly because they have much more curiosity, and are obliged to become increasingly inventive to avoid being chopped up by an ever more powerful and corporate-minded music industry. Suzuki considers his music neither old nor new. If anything, he thinks, it has more of an affinity with traditional styles. "Traditional music is not going to die, but rock music dies," he asserts. "Improvised music is older than composed music because it already existed in the Stone Age. This is how music was in the beginning. Nobody composed. Traditional music is still improving in the process and after thousands of years it is still there."

We talk about the effect of technology on music: how the 'newness' of music can be measured – and subsequently dated – by the hardware involved. Much as he is keen to avoid being a "slave to the industry", there is one topic to which he keeps returning. "We live in the 21st century, so people are thinking to make new kinds of music. But I don't think it's necessary to make new kinds of music. For me it's not more interesting if it's new or it's old, but we must find another way in the presentation of the music and as a way to play. That to me is much more interesting."

The 21st century might be an age of increased ease of communication, he contends, but it's still vital to prevent people from sinking into a passive apathy. "They don't think of themselves, don't go to their own way," he complains. "You've got to get the people more awake with things."

Just as he did in Can, Suzuki still sings a mixture of English, Japanese and a personal lexicon of phonetics,

to share with people." He has left the religious sect now. "I don't practise any more, but I believe in the Bible and I believe in God," he confirms.

Born in 1950, Damo Suzuki grew up in Oiso, a small city in the Kanagawa prefecture near Yokohama. He recalls that after the Second World War, he had a population of 50,000 of which 30,000 were American soldiers. Befriending some of the troops, he was introduced to music that he had been unable to buy in Japan, specifically soul records on Atlantic, Tamla Motown and Stax, he was particularly drawn to artists like The Temptations, The Four Tops and Aretha Franklin.

Of his own youthful music making, he says: "I played saxophone and the clarinet when I was young. I was not in a group, though, as I didn't have any ambition to be a musician and so I just practised by myself. Actually, when I was 15 or 16 years old I managed a school band of younger people, 12 years, ten years old, to get them some concerts, much more than make music myself."

Although his real name is Kengo Suzuki, Damo got his nickname from a Japanese comic book figure from the mid-60s, called Merude Damo-o. "This character is almost like Charlie Brown," explains his near namesake. "He likes to make everything good, but everything goes wrong. Damo means mistake, or anything negative, so he is like a 'mistake kid'. So they called me Damo-o and at first I didn't like this, but I used it when I travelled throughout the world. In some countries people do not really say Damo-o and so it changed to Damo, and since then I use this name."

He rechristened his new name at the end of the 60s when Suzuki – already an avowed hippy in his late teens – set off travelling. As the hippy trail from Europe headed out east, so conversely Damo reversed the directions by heading west, spending some time busking in Germany despite his rudimentary skills. "It was quite easy," he recalls. "I knew one of two chords so I improvised much more with the voice because I didn't have so much technical things with the guitar, so I must support my voice guitar playing."

"I also did street [visual] art and I sometimes made happenings on the street," he continues. "It's really nice because you get really direct communication with the people as it's on the meeting place of the people. It's much more natural. If you go to West Africa, for example, musicians don't play on the stage, they are playing their music on the corner of the street. And housewives, they are waking up quite early and they are getting it together, and they improvise music. I am much more towards the African kind of spiritual thing than the European kind of thing."

The late 60s saw some significant political upheavals in Europe, such as the Paris student demonstrations in 1968, and London's anti-Vietnam War demonstrations in Grosvenor Square. Political radicalism was filtering into the US and European counterculture. Because Germany had the most revolutionary music scene, it's easy to forget that its society was still essentially conservative. "I never thought of myself as different, but people saw me as quite different," says Suzuki, recalling his arrival in Germany. As there were few Asians living there back then, surely the Japanese freak's public art must have attracted some negative reactions?

"No, not at all," he replies. "I didn't have any difficulties. Not racist at all. Everybody was so friendly, even older people. Sometimes they invited me to stay



which even in the early 70s he called the language of the Stone Age. This has caused some fans to come up with bizarre guesses as to what he was singing about. Why does he favour this approach? "Just to create the sound of the moment," he replies. "It doesn't actually have any kind of meaning because I'm not so interested in music together with texts, because then it's not really free and people listen too much to the texts and they are trying to understand them. You make a text and it's always connected together with some kind of epoch, maybe some political sort."

Given Suzuki's commitment to the moment, and to instant composing over standard composition, it comes as a surprise that his current listening era towards classical music. "I like to have a really different thing in the head because I am improvising every day, so I don't like to have any [similar] information in the head," he explains. "If you have [too much] information you cannot do many things – not only music, if you are painting or if you make photos you are already educated in the head, so you work much better without any [extra] information."

"Not only that," he continues, "the first time I listened to music was classical music, when I was ten years old, like Mozart and Beethoven. Now I am much more listening to Prokofiev and Shostakovich and things like this, because it's a lot more exciting for me. They are still composed music, but a kind of a surprising moment, because in the 1920s and 30s, even for classical composers, sound is much more important than melody itself."

Throughout our conversation, Suzuki often refers to his music as process. Being part of this process, this art-in-the-doing, is the thing that defines him. "You have all the time a process, because it's not really product, that's the difference between my music and what 90 per cent of people are doing in the world," he says. "Otherwise we end up being a cover version of ourselves and in the concert always play the same pieces. Exactly the same. And the people like it. But this type of audience is like a tourist who comes to London and takes photos in front of Big Ben. And when they come home they select some photos, but that's all. If you are really so interested in travelling, you [should] make much more communication with the people who are living there. And it's your own experience. Not like 1000 other people's."

It seems that at this point in his life, musically everything has come around full circle. But how does he feel he has changed? "I am already 54 years old and I don't feel ashamed about anything, so it's much easier than before," he confides. "If you get kind of old, people find themselves much more and they like to do things that they really like. So most people are going back to their roots. Irmn Schmidt is composing again and he did it already 30, 40 years before, but he found it again. So we have many chances to develop ourselves."

"Like my life experience of travelling, my music is also travelling because there is no concept," he continues. "If I am leaving today and I already have a concept for tomorrow, then much better asleep in a bed. I like to only make music when I don't know what happens. If I know before already, better I don't play." Does he mean that if you know where you're going, the journey is not as interesting? "There is actually no end," Suzuki laughs. "If you think about the end then much better don't start." □ Dario Suzuki Website: www.dariosuzuki.de



POSITIVE FEEDBACK

AT 75, ALVIN LUCIER SAYS THAT HE'S HAPPY TO BE REGARDED AS A "JOURNEYMAN COMPOSER". HIS LIFE'S WORK SUGGESTS OTHERWISE, AS PIECES SUCH AS *MUSIC FOR SOLD PERFORMER*, DRAWING ON THE ALPHA WAVES OF HIS OWN BRAIN, AND THE DRONE SPEECH OF *I AM SITTING IN A ROOM* ATTEST ON THE EYE OF THE UK FEEDBACK. ORDER FROM NOISE TOUR, CHRISTOPH COX TALKS TO LUCIER ABOUT A CAREER DEDICATED TO EXPOSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MUSIC AND THE PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL. PHOTOS: CHRIS BUCK



Music, the story goes, is the most immaterial of the arts. Invisible, ephemeral, ethereal and abstract, it is barely of this world. Music belongs, rather, to an ideal realm of mind, spirit, magic and the divine.

Few musical thinkers or practitioners have done more to challenge this view than Alvin Lucier. Over a career that has spanned four decades, the pioneering sound artist and experimental composer has tirelessly called attention to the palpably physical and material characteristics of sound and music. Addressing a culture that takes only the visible and tangible to be real, his installations, audio experiments and musical compositions offer sound you can see and touch. An early piece, *The Queen Of The South*, uses sonic reverberation to draw patterns in grains of sand, tea, coffee and salt. *Tyndal Oscillations* invites singers and musicians to choreograph the movements of a Bunsen burner flame (which Lucier wryly calls "a 19th century oscilloscope") via high-pitched acoustic and electronic sounds. And audio installations such as *Still And Moving Lines Of Silence In Families Of Hyperbolic* fill spaces with undulating sound waves and interference patterns that one can walk through like a bath at the seashore.

Much of Lucier's vast output has explored the movement of sound through space. Intrigued by this most elemental auditory phenomenon, he has constructed an endless variety of settings in which to study how sound waves interact with one another and with their spatial environments. Cavernous halls, institutional stairways, railroad boxcars, domestic rooms, milk bottles, sea shells, glass vases, ostrich eggs – all have served as laboratories for his humble yet profound and poetic audio art. "Thinking of sounds as measurable wavelengths instead of as high or low musical notes," Lucier remarked in 1969, "changed my whole idea of music from a metaphor to a fact and, in a real way, has connected me to architecture." This fascination with sound in space and in resonant environments of all sorts quickly led him out of the concert hall and away from any sort of traditional musical composition. Indeed, along with fellow traveler Max Neuhaus, Lucier is among the founding fathers of sound art installation. So it's no wonder that with the sound art explosion of the past decade, Lucier's work has found new audiences and is routinely namechecked by audio artists. Several recent releases have added this rediscovery. *Waspers And Other Early Works*, issued by New World Records in 2002, documents pioneering installations and compositions from the late 1950s. *Lovely Music* has reassured the early 70s set *Still And Moving Lines* alongside *Still Lines*, a collection of recent works. And, last year, the Mode label released a pair of newish instrumental pieces performed by the celebrated Arditi Quartet. This coincidence of recent and earlier work allows one to see how persistently Lucier has explored a small but rich set of auditory phenomena: reflection, reverberation, feedback, standing waves, interference patterns and other elements of sonic science.

Lucier is part of a maverick American experimental tradition that stretches back to Henry Cowell, Harry

Partch and John Cage. Geographically, this experimental counterculture has always been either rooted in or pulled toward the West Coast and its associations with freedom from tradition. Yet live another American maverick, Charles Ives, Lucier is a New Englander through and through. Born in Nashua, New Hampshire in 1933, Lucier has spent his entire life in the American north east, the historic centre of American serialist composition. In college at Yale, he played snare drum in the marching band and graduated with a degree in composition before heading up to Brandeis University for graduate school. "I heard most of the new pieces of Berio, Nono and the other Italian and German composers," Lucier recalls. "They were beautiful but just didn't interest me as something I could emulate. That complex, serial, high-powered music just didn't interest me at all." Instead, he was attracted to the neoclassicism of serialism's arch-enemy: Igor Stravinsky.

Lucier's own neoclassical compositions won him some acclaim, including a prestigious prize at Tanglewood, the summer residence of The Boston Symphony Orchestra. But by the time he graduated from Brandeis, Lucier had lost confidence in his adopted style. "My music sounded too much like Stravinsky," he confesses. "Neoclassicism was a dead end for me. And, looking back on it, it was a dead end for other people too. I mean you had to have a specific talent to go to the past like Stravinsky did and be able to recreate that. It required a very specific kind of talent, which I did not have."

Ironically, it was a trip to Europe that allowed Lucier to discover America. In 1960, he headed to Italy on a Fulbright Scholarship. After a fairly staid summer of study at the Conservatory in Venice, he stumbled across a performance by John Cage, David Tudor, Merce Cunningham and Carolyn Brown. Lucier was blown away. "The Cage-Tudor event came like a bolt out of the blue," he recalls. "All of the protocols of the concert situation were violated. The concert began, as I remember, with David Tudor standing down the aisle of the theatre and diving under the piano, hitting the underside to make the first sound of the concert. Cage made an appearance playing a piano that rose up into the pit hydraulically. The four performers had cards upon which were written instructions regarding sounds or actions to be made and where to make them. The entire theatre was used – stage, aisles, balconies. During that concert a man walked down the aisle and struck the piano with an umbrella and announced: 'Now I am a composer!' At the height of the pandemonium, Cage was tuning a radio that he used as a sound source, and the Pope came on asking for peace on Earth."

The next summer, Lucier found himself in Darmstadt with Frederic Rzewski, another New Englander in Europe on a Fulbright. Though generally the summer school for the European avant garde, Darmstadt occasionally opened the door to Cagean experimentalists, unwittingly staging a clash between avant garde composition and the experimental counterculture, between rigorous formalism and musical freedom. It was in Darmstadt that Lucier first encountered the work of Fluxus provocateurs La Monte

I am standing on a stool. Alvin Lucier at home in Connetquot, April 2004

Young and George Brecht and attended a piano class taught by David Tudor, whose theatrical art-infused stalwart avant-gardists such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and Theodor Adorno, who were also enrolled in his course.

The shock of these initial confrontations with experimental music continued to be felt by Lucier throughout his two years in Italy. He composed a piece for Rzewski in which he notated exaggerated physical movements of the pianist's arms, elbows, and hands; and he dabbled in electronic music at the Studio di Fonologia in Milan. But Lucier had not yet found his niche within experimental music. Back in the United States, he took up a position as director of the Chamber Course at Brandeis University, in Waltham, Massachusetts, where he emulated Stravinsky's practice of programming concerts that combined traditional with modern work. At the same time, he began going to Ann Arbor, Michigan for the annual ONCE Festivals – a wild multimedia extravaganza that were a Midwestern parallel to the New York-centred Fluxus happenings. Then, in 1965, Lucier conceived what he calls his "breakthrough work", the now infamous *Music For Sisyphus*. He had befriended Edmund Dewan, a Brandeis physicist who was doing brainwave research for the Air Force. "Dewan described to me this phenomenon that had to do with visualisation," reflects Lucier, "that by putting yourself in a non-visual state – it would be called a meditative state now – you could release the potential of the alpha [rhythm] that is inside your head. It's a very small amount, but it would become perceptible, at least to an amplifier. The idea of it just struck me very strongly, probably more for theatrical or visionary reasons than for sound or musical reasons."

The performance was theatrical indeed, a rich combination of the awestruckly scientific, the mysteriously magical and the ingeniously goofy. Lucier sat quietly in a chair while, for several minutes, an assistant swabbed his scalp with conducting paste and attached EEG electrodes – a witty reflection on the traditional instrumentalist's preparations for performance. Then, sitting still with his eyes closed, Lucier descended into a meditative state. Before long, the electrodes tapped bursts of alpha waves that travelled through amplifiers to a network of remote speakers that rattled snare drums, gongs, metal trash cans, cardboard boxes, brass drums, piano strings and tympani.

Evoking the same sorts of responses as laptop performance today, the piece was greeted with a mixture of amazement, delight, incredulity and annoyance. Like laptop performance, it short-circuited the visual fixation with instrumental virtuosity and manual dexterity. Instead, the piece audaciously proposed to make music directly with what Lucier called the "little electronic studio inside [the] brain". It was his compositional turning point, displaying for the first time a range of characteristics that would mark his career: an obsession with physical waves of all sorts, a creative use of scientific instruments and research for artistic purposes, an elegant simplicity



Clockwise from top right: Lucier at a public reading, 1969; with Kathy Morton and David Tudor at Radio Bremen, 1972, performing *Bird And Person Dying*; 1970; filming TV documentary *Music With Roots In The Air* with Robert Ashley and Anne Keren, 1978

that focuses attention on the acoustic phenomena at hand, and a genuinely experimental approach to composition in which musical structure is open-ended and not determined in advance. "It required more of a configuration of equipment than any kind of composition," notes Lucier. "No structure was imposed on it. I just let the natural flow of the brasswaxes be the predominant focal point rather than trying to structure them in some way, which didn't seem appropriate."

The piece also opened up a new DIY way of working. This impulse led to the formation, in 1966, of the Sonic Arts Union, an experimental ensemble in which Lucier was joined by Robert Ashley, David Behrman and Gordon Mumma. "I encountered in Bob and Gordon a kind of musical thinking that was different from anything I'd ever experienced," Lucier reflects. "Bob was very theatrical and dealing with ordinary speech and things like that. And Gordon and David were designing their own instruments. They didn't fall into the commercial synthesizer thing, which was developing at that time. They were making their own equipment. So it was very exciting. Your piece was actually the configuration of equipment that you had designed. They were also deliberately unspectacular in their ideas and their performances. The whole thing had a very independent American quality that seemed more like live than it did like Cage or Tudor, though they, too, were both very important. My teachers and my other colleagues were getting very bitter, because the musical establishment wasn't forthcoming in performing their own works in any real way. They sat and sat and waited. And the thing about Cage and Tudor is that they didn't sit and wait. They went out and performed almost anywhere at any time with their own equipment. They didn't rely on other established performers. And that was very exciting and very valuable."

Though its membership was geographically dispersed (Ashley and Mumma lived in Ann Arbor, Behrman in New York, and Lucier outside of Boston), the Sonic Arts Union toured regularly for nearly a decade, slowly building a repertoire of pieces. Each concert featured one piece by each of the four members. "We were an anthology rather than a band," recalls Behrman. "We shared equipment and stage-managing skills, but never did any group pieces. The personalities were always distinct."

Lucier's own contributions included *Music For Solo Performer* and other now classic pieces such as *Vespers*, *Chambers*, *The Queen Of The South*, *The Duke Of York* and *Bird And Person Dying*. *Vespers* was the first of his major works to explore the movement of sound in space and the activity of close listening. Answering the philosopher's question, "What is it like to be a bat?" the piece invited performers to inhabit the sensorium of these blind, hypersensory creatures. Flooded in a dark room and equipped with handheld echolocation devices called Sondols, four performers attempted "to articulate the sound personality of the environment," and to orient themselves and navigate by acoustic means alone. Each of them moved slowly, the space, mapping and measuring it with a Sondol pumping out short clicks

that bounced off of reflective surfaces, thus supplying auditory information about obstacles, pathways and the physical characteristics of surrounding objects. Documented on the recent *New World* release, it is a sonic hybrid of insectile chatter, ritual percussion and mechanical repetition.

Chambers, too, is entirely about sound in space, in this case a variety of intimate spaces, "a banquet of small dishes" as Robert Ashley aptly described it. And, like so many of Lucier's scores, it is thoroughly open-ended, specifying only a set of initial conditions that allow for myriad different realizations. The score asks performers to "collect or make large or small resonant environments" (jars, shells, mugs, bathtubs, pots, etc) and to "find a way to make them sound" by blowing, rubbing, bumping, talking into, dropping them, and so on. The interest, however, lies not in the collection of objects, nor in the assortment of sounds, but in the ways in which environments of various sizes, shapes and materials act as filters or modulators to create new sounds. The recorded version is a concrete composite of cocktail party conversation, PA announcements, radio music, piano tones, clapping water and other sources, but all run through a battery of containers that stretch, squeeze, bend and flatten sounds like the modules of an analogue synthesizer.

In the spring of 1970, Lucier moved to Middletown, Connecticut to take up a position at Wesleyan University, a hot spot for ethnomusicology that, under his tutelage, has since become a key coordinate in the landscape of American experimental music and sound art. Newly settled in a rented faculty apartment replete with wall-to-wall carpet and thick drapes, he recorded the piece: "In so many ways, his [Tudor's] was a more... I am sitting in a room in his typically modest yet earnestly investigative style, he recorded a short text that simply described the procedure of the piece: 'I am sitting in a room different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice and I am going to play it back into the room again and again until the resonant frequencies of the room reinforce themselves so that any semblance of my speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, is destroyed. What you will hear, then, are the natural resonant frequencies of the room articulated by speech. I regard the activity not so much as a demonstration of a physical fact, but more as a way to smooth out any irregularities my speech might have.'"

Like *Music For Solo Performer*, the piece is beautifully simple and bluntly scientific, yet also marvelously transformative. The text is read into one tape recorder and then repeatedly played back into another—35 times in the available recording, a 1980 version issued by Lovely Music. Over the 45 minutes of the performance, Lucier's voice—and particularly his characteristic stutter (fittingly named after the key words "rhythm" and "smooth")—gradually becomes engulfed by the space. After ten cycles, speech has become a surging wash of metallic tones, like a slow, distorted steel drum routine. After 20 cycles, it has become a

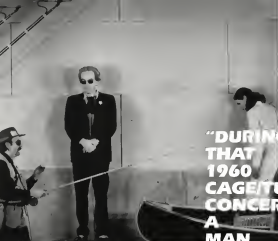
distant carillon dirge; after 30, a nervous, *Ovaleque* drone. What began as a personal confession in a domestic space gradually becomes pure, anonymous sound that overwhelms and abolishes the performer's personality.

This commitment to anonymity and purity is, oddly enough, characteristic of Lucier's musical practice. Like Cage and many post-Cage experimentalists and minimalists, Lucier wishes to reduce self-expression in order to get at the acoustic phenomena themselves. For Lucier, this is what distinguishes properly "experimental" music from "improvisation." "If you improvise," he contends, "it's your past and your personal preferences and your ideas about what sounds should or can be that you're thinking about." Reflecting on *Vespers*, he continues, "I am satisfied not to compose terribly much but to let the space and the situation take over. In other words, I don't intrude my personality on a space... I just bring a very simple idea about a task that players can do and let the space push the players around."

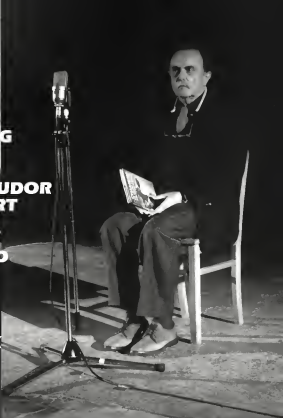
Eschewing both the interior world of human personality and the cosmic world of the ineffable and divine, Lucier focuses on the world in between: nature and natural phenomena in all their magnificence. Not surprisingly, then, his inspiration frequently comes from the physical sciences. "Scientific experiments have often given me ideas for pieces," he grants. "Sometimes I do little more than frame them in an artistic context." Yet it would be wrong to think of him as purely clinical. Scientists, he insists, often miss the poetic beauty of nature and the sensual experience of natural forces. "I was never very good at science in school," he reports with a laugh. "It's ironic. I understand the principles more because I've used them in a piece exponentially rather than theoretically." I suggest that this is what makes him an artist rather than a scientist. "You know, I was thinking about that the other day," he replies. "We did a project years ago in Albuquerque. There was a scientist involved, and he was talking to us as if he was the fountain of ideas. But he was a scientist. He didn't have artistic ideas. And whenever I would say something, he thought my ideas were trivial. You know what I mean? So it's a big mistake for an artist to rely on scientists. The scientist must offer his ideas and equipment and then get out of the way!"

This combination of scientific investigation and aesthetic sensibility led to Lucier's discovery of the wonders of feedback. In the autumn of 1971, writer and sound artist Douglas Kahn sent Lucier a package containing a peculiar Christmas tree ornament: a baseball-sized silver bird that repeatedly emitted a mournful electronic chirp. Lucier spent an afternoon in Wesleyan's electronic music studio experimenting with the birdcall and a pair of binocular microphones designed to be worn in the ears to aid in the production of realistic recordings. "At one point," Lucier recalls, "feedback began to sound. Before I could get to the amplifier and lower the volume control I began hearing phantom images of the birdcall, which seemed to come from inside my head and at the same time to be located in various parts of the room. They were amazing. What I was hearing

PHOTOS BY DUSTIN BRINK, MICHAEL SCHNEIDER, PHILIP



**"DURING
THAT
1960
CAGE/TUDOR
CONCERT
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MAN
WALKED
DOWN
THE
AISLE
AND
STRUCK
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PIANO
WITH
AN
UMBRELLA
AND
ANNOUNCED:
'NOW
I
AM
A
COMPOSER!'"**



was heterodyning, a term in radio technology describing beat frequencies produced between radio frequencies. In this case, the phenomenon was produced by the interaction between the continuous strands of feedback and the sounds of the birdcall, both within audio range," inspired by his discovery, Lucier decided to take this oddball set-up to the stage under the title *Bird And Person Dying*. He mounted the chirping bird on a microphone stand flanked by two loudspeakers. With the microphones in his ears, Lucier would slowly move through the performance space, tilting his head to orchestrate strands of feedback and looking for sweet spots where he could capture ghostly whistles.

A collaboration with a colleague in physics gave Lucier the idea for another of his key pieces, *Music On A Long Thin Wire*. In 1977, he and John Tieffry were co-teaching a course on musical acoustics. To demonstrate the division of vibration into natural intervals, the two clamped a short piece of metal wire across a laboratory table, straddled a horseshoe-shaped electromagnet over one end of it and set the wire into vibration with an oscillator. Watching the vibrating wire divide into sections with clear nodal points, Lucier began to think of turning this demonstration into an experimental composition. "A short length of wire would look like a laboratory experiment," he recalls, "but if you thought of it as a sound sculpture, your imagination could take that wire down the length of a room. I had to be prepared for not knowing what it was going to sound like, although in my imagination I knew. I had an intuition that it would sound amazing."

Lucier experimented with various lengths of wire and ways of playing it. He performed with students and fellow composers who fiddled with the oscillator frequencies and excited the wire with synthesizer signals. But Lucier wasn't happy with these results. "The music never went beyond a kind of poetic improvisation," he remembers. "I finally decided to remove my hand from the musical process. I discovered that by carefully tuning the oscillator, the wire could be left to sound by itself." With this decision, the wire ceased to be an inert musical tool and instead became a kind of living organism. "Fatigue, air currents, heating and cooling, even human proximity could cause the wire to undergo enormous changes," he notes. "In a dance studio in Kyoto, for example, visitors' footsteps on the Marley floor caused extremely slight shifts in the positions of the tables to which the wire was clamped, causing spectacular changes in the sound of the wire. Shin Nakagawa, who arranged my visit there, slept overnight under the wire and reported that even with no movement in the room it would mysteriously erupt into triadic harmonies."

For the past two decades, Lucier has continued to explore many of the basic acoustic phenomena opened up by these early pieces. Yet, for the most part, he has done so by way of classical instruments. The shift wasn't so much the result of choice as of chance. "Performers who play conventional instruments started asking me to write them things,"

he explains. "And I was happy to do so because I wanted to make pieces that musicians can play that don't require Synclides and branscape amplifiers and so forth. So I made a whole bunch of works with solo instruments or ensembles dealing with interference patterns with or without sinewave oscillators." Indeed, the exploration of interference patterns and, particularly, the phenomenon of audible "beating"—the pulsing effect produced when two sounds of slightly different frequency or pitch are heard together—has been a regular feature of Lucier's compositions since the early 1980s. The effect is vividly realized by pairing a traditional instrument with an oscillator, which produces pure tones that can be indefinitely sustained and precisely controlled.

In the earliest of these pieces, *Crossings*, an oscillator slowly sweeps through the entire pitch range of a small orchestra. As it rises, the instruments—from double bass and bassoon through violin and clarinet—try to match and cross the oscillator tone producing pulses that wobble and quiver. It's an incredibly simple idea. But the simplicity only highlights the tremulous frisson one feels when the frequencies approach one another and begin to dance. The same principle animates the more recent *Music For Piano With Slow Sweep Pure Wave Oscillators*, one of Lucier's most strikingly beautiful pieces (released in 2003, on SBT Live). Two oscillators sweep up and down while the pianist plays single tones that jump between them. The interaction of the three pitches creates a wealth of acoustic effects, from vivid beats and harmonies to subtle echoes and spectral choruses. "I love the idea that rhythm is generated by tuning," Lucier gleefully comments, "that if the pianist hits a note before it arrives in the oscillator sweep, the beating will slow down; and when it hits unseen there's no beating; and if it comes over, the beating will speed up again. So you have this movement always: slowing down, speeding up."

Another recent instrumental piece, *Small Waves*, harkens back to Chambers. Six glass vessels partially filled with water and fitted with contact microphones are spread around the room. During the performance, the microphone volume is increased or decreased, generating strands of feedback that the players attempt to match or approximate with long tones. Occasionally, a pair of water pourers empties one glass into another, changing the pitches of the feedback. "So I use these vessels with feedback instead of oscillators," notes Lucier. "They make this rather pure sound. And they're also beautiful; you like to look at them, which interests me a lot."

The visual and acoustic properties of water-filled vessels and feedback are also the focal point of a new installation called *Two Glasses Of Water*, which Lucier will mount this summer in a cargo container at the Museum of Modern Art in Zug, Switzerland. "There will be two glasses of water, each with a microphone in it," Lucier explains. "And there'll be two strands of feedback that you can feed in two loudspeakers. As the water evaporates, the pitch will change. I'm assuming that it won't evaporate at the same rate. So you'll get interference patterns." Again, Lucier is

returning to a key feature of *Music On A Long Thin Wire*—the idea that, with a little added electricity, nature can make music all on its own, producing results that will be wonderfully unpredictable.

Over the past two decades, Lucier's installation work has taken a back seat to his instrumental composition. Yet he continues to be active as a sound artist. He recently produced a recorded audio complement to a wall sculpture by his friend Sol LeWitt. And he's currently at work on an intriguing project with New York's Sospeso Ensemble. Here he is also returning to the themes of his earlier work, in this case *Chambers* and *I Am Sitting In A Room*. Travelling throughout Eastern Europe, Lucier used balloon bursts to capture the "acoustical signatures" of spaces from cathedrals to minishells. "If you burst a balloon in a room," he explains, "you get a signature of that room. You can extract the acoustics of those spaces articulated by the balloon bursts." He then asked five members of Sospeso to record sound samples that Lucier will project into those virtual spaces in an installation at New York's Engine 27.

These days, Lucier constantly shuffles between new projects and his classic work. In late June and early July he'll be performing *Bird And Person Dying* on the Feedback: Order From Noise tour promoted by London Musicians Collective for Contemporary Music Network. He has also recently composed *Tapper*, his low-tech reinvigoration of *Vespers*. It calls upon a violinist to tap the violin with the butt of his or her bow, creating sharp clicks and echoes that articulate the physical space of the performance. "I'm trying to get away from the oscillator thing now," Lucier muses. "I just feel the need to do something else. *Tapper* is one of them. It's just a way to give a solo player something very different to do. It doesn't use electronics at all. It's just an idea I got. I just believe that you should excite whatever ideas you get, you know?"

At 73, Lucier is perfectly happy to work in this pragmatic, experimental mode, without any grand plan, just following circumstances where they lead him. "I'm really happy to feel like a journeyman composer who makes pieces for people," he confesses. "I got an email from a young violinist whom I had never ever met before in my life. She said, 'do you have any pieces for solo violin?' I said, 'No, but I'll make you one.' You know, in New York School of poets—[John Ashbery, Frank O'Hara, and the others—] they didn't wait for grandiose ideas. They would just make pieces for each other, a poem for someone's birthday or something like that. And I find it very freeing to make a piece like the one I wrote for that violinist. I didn't feel the need to do something great, just to do something she could use. I think that my professors, years ago, were frightened by that, thinking they needed to make a big splash rather than just do something. I like to feel like an 18th century artist who just does his work." □ The Feedback: Order From Noise tour begins on 24 June; for more info, see www.feedback.org.uk. Some quotations in this article are drawn from Reflections: Interviews, Scores, Writings (MusicTexte 1995) and other published articles and interviews by Allen Lucier.



Charts

Playlists from the outer limits

Ellen Pulman's string-down thing (see page 30)

Fingerpickin' 15

John Fahey
Red Cross (Reverend)
Robert Beacho
Sadness (Taurus)
Matt Valentine
MV Faintness, Daydreams, Gels Mangled And
Shades Up With Corrie (COM Release)
Elizabeth Cotten
Fingert Toss And Other North Carolina Folk Songs
And Times (Pillbox)
Rev. Blind Gary Davis
Complete Recorded Works 1935-49 In Chronological
Order (Document)
Jan O'Rourke
Bad Timing (Dog City)
Six Organs Of Admittance
For Octave Pad (Time Lag)
Old And In The Way
Old And In The Way (Vista)
Jack Rose
Rag Munkies (VHF)
Blind Willie McTell
The Definitive... 1927-36 (Carlin)
Starfire Banjo-Janghans
Bans And Bedges (Strange Attraction Audio House)
Skip James
In So Glad Complete 1931 Paramount Recordings
(Snooze)
Glen Jones
This Is The Way That Bleeds It Out (Strange Attraction
Audio House)
Veritas
Wooden Gator (Quasi Music)

Compiled by The Souler

15 Darkside Death Trips

Phil Ochs
Peasants Of The Harbors (MM)
Richard & Miss Furies
Deflections In A Crystal Void (Vanguard)
Arthur Lee Harper
Love Is A Revolution (Nectar)
Perry Leopold
Experiment In Metaphysics (Private)
Beas
Ovation (Dandelion)
Oliver
Standing Alone (Private)
Toni Rago
Familiar Songs (Finger)
Bob Brown
The Enslavement Of America (Desire)
Roy Harper
The Sophisticated Beggar (Strike)
John St. Paul
Control (Monkey)
Dames
Sinner (Chameleon)
Demon
Song Of A Gypsy (VHF)
Marc Wey
Dancing With Alice (Star Caus)
Nick Allentons
Dogs With (Electrolite)
Tina Buckley
Goodbye And Hello (Electrolite)

Compiled by Michael Kikolagou, Underground Rock
Records, Antifa Gence, sapsap3@att.net

Circus Maximus 15

Headset
Spacestrings (Scope)
Bark Psychosis
Cadenance (Dustbucker (Fire)
Maria Stewart
No Need To Be Lonesome (Mood)
My Cat Is An Alien
The Best Is Always (Ecstasy)
Kin
Sunbow (Shanty)
Glen Ambarci
Gripes From The Estate (Teach)
Matt Valentine
Space Chimes (Finger)
Rubing Whurles
Whispered "M" (Myst Mouse)
Junior Rags
Lost East (Electrolite)
Veritas
Difficult Easy Listening (Nectar)
Max De Warden
Where I Am Today (Accidental)
Jack Rose
Two Dignified Of... (VHF)
PO-Bix
The Well Of Memory (Perhaps Translucent)
Carter Miser
Pays God Ltd.
Devereaux Schubert
Relaying In The Hands (Young Good)

Compiled By F. Farrow & C. Tuglin for Circus Maximus
www.circusmaximus.net

The Office Ambience

Zoea Perkins & Blue-Mood
Phantom Orchestra (Myst)
Bark Psychosis
Cadenance (Dustbucker (Fire)
Silva Pylman & Kowad Spranger
On (Chester)
Lars Hornbush
Picks (Snafower-Supersound)
Miley Dreed
African Anthem (Deluxe Edition (Vandal)
Black Dice
Crescent Corridor (Fat Cat)
Philip Ciano
Ambiguities (Collaboration)
Fennema & Keith Rowe
Live At The L.I. (Snooze)
Stratostroma Neuborn
Kills Theme: Early Recordings (Mist)
Workshop
Yag Softball (Song)
Paul Jones
My Wrong Mood (Teeling Ground)
Melchior Productions
The Meeting (Playhouse)
Morgana Faux
Pain-Jon (Myst)
Rips Chawhan
Three Aspects Of The News (Table Of The Elements)
Toni Carter
Monument (Snooze)

Compiled by The Wire Sound System

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, labels, musicians, readers etc. Email charts@thewire.co.uk

Reviews



DAT Politics reviewed in Soundcheck

Contacts

Information on artists, labels, distributors, etc. is easily accessible through Internet search engines such as Google. See also the Links section at www.thewire.co.uk

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Freedom Is, Freedom Ain't
By Scott Saul
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De Victoraville
Victoraville, Canada
Lydia Lunch
Birmingham, UK

Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs, vinyl and singles



Party on (left to right): John Zorn, Milford Graves, Arto Lindsay

JOHN ZORN

50.1: MASADA STRING TRIO

TZADIK 5001 CD

50.2: MILFORD GRAVES/ JOHN ZORN DUO

TZADIK 5008 CD

50.3: LOCUS SOLUS

TZADIK 5009 CD

50.4: ELECTRIC MASADA

TZADIK 5004 CD

When John Zorn marked his 40th birthday with an audacious month of nightly concerts at the Knitting Factory in September of 1993, he was at the apex of his stint as poster boy for the American avant garde. Already, his significance had been hailed by *The New York Times*, bastion of establishment credibility. Meanwhile, Zorn's all star international noise conspiracy Naked City had become a major draw among disaffected youth seeking the latest word in musical abandon. His career to that point represented a curriculum vitae of unpredictable thrills, while showcasing the major figures of the 80s downtown New York ferment and points beyond.

Rash forward to September of 2003, when Zorn mounted a similarly expansive overview of the preceding decade on his 50th birthday. Fans gumbled online that too many nights were devoted to various iterations of the ubiquitous Masada; other programmes were devoted to new incarnations of older projects like Locus Solus and Pankilim, as well as encounters with artists Zorn had championed with his Tzadik label — itself a product of the decade under survey — such as Milford Graves, Wadada Leo Smith and Susie Barron.

Notably, most of the new ground broken during the festival was reserved for evenings devoted to Zorn's formal chamber music. He has increasingly taken on the aspect of "serious composer" in recent years, writing concert pieces for others to perform. His stage appearances, meanwhile, were generally reserved for friendly jousts with longtime partners. Four releases in a new 50th Birthday Celebration series on Tzadik, with seven scheduled to follow, bolster that impression. Each finds Zorn on familiar terrain, whether as mienic improviser or invisible promoter.

He appears in the latter capacity on the first

release, which documents a performance by the Masada String Trio. Zorn's voice can occasionally be heard, as can those of his players and audience, since the series is designed to evoke a "fly on the wall" sense of being there. Otherwise, his presence is limited to his compositions and the guidance he provides to Mark Feldman, cellist Erik Friedlander and bassist Greg Cohen.

Virtually all the selections covered are familiar from their studio incarnations on *The Circle Maker*. To a piece, however, the music sounds best here, without losing an iota of precision in daunting selections such as "Malkut" (its fleeting references to "Für Elise" intact). Credit is due to Feldman and Friedlander, who balance their liberties with an absolute security of technique rarely encountered in improvised music. Still, the invisible hand of Zorn is responsible for the pacing. He controls the duration, affording his compositions more room to breathe.

The same songbook serves as the basis for the plugged-in maelstrom of *Electric Masada* proving its adaptability beyond any doubt. Where the String Trio is refined and elegant, *Electric Masada* — a variable group that here includes incendiary guitarist Marc Ribot, a supportive Jamie Saft (keyboards), the twinned engines of Joey Baron and Kenny Wollesen, and the colouristic efforts of percussionist Cyo Baptista and Ikuo Mom on laptop electronics — seethes and snarls to a rhythmic imperative largely derived from the funk-stoked Miles Davis groups of the early 70s.

The previously gentle, atmospheric "Isiah-Nai" is transformed into a madrigal storm. Zorn's searing alto scawling out over roaring guitar and a lurching rhythm section, as Ribot gives free rein to his most acidic fantasies. Zorn frequently contents himself with a supporting role, while Ribot's guitar remains front and centre throughout, soaring over the dubby tape of "Hadasah" and crying like a throater Albert Collins against Saft's watercolor daubs on "Hizlar".

As headstrong as *Electric Masada* might seem on first blush, however, comparing the present version of "Hizlar" to its earlier String Trio incarnation on *The Circle Maker* (where it was titled "Hizlar") is revealing. Save for the instrumentation, the arrangements are virtually identical. If Friedlander's keening cello more "authentically" evokes Jewish folklore than Ribot's throaty guitar, Feldman's

Steve Smith examines the wreckage of John Zorn's marathon 50th birthday party blowout

subsequent violin twittings perform the same function as Baptista's and Mom's insectoid chatter.

Zorn's duet with maverick free jazz drummer Milford Graves gives the greatest sense of "you had to be there". Part of this is due to the drummer's offstage antics. At one point, reportedly, he frolicked among the audience members, then returned to the stage and scooped Zorn up onto his shoulders while the saxophonist continued to play. Alone, Graves gives voice to shamanistic impulses and invented tribal chanting. Together, the duo channelled the wild, woolly spirit of ESP-Disk blowouts. Zorn's alto frenetically puckering, popping and fizzing over Graves's earthy pulsations. Surprisingly, on record, the music reveals a far greater depth and nuance than might have been apparent at the event itself.

The chasm between past and present Zorn is most apparent on *Locus Solus*, named for an early game procedure. The present set reunites Zorn with a globally anarchic Arto Lindsay on guitar and headstrong Anton Fier on drums, two crucial early collaborators whose own musics took them in different directions during the 90s. Zorn and Lindsay rarely perform together anymore; Fier, at the time of the performance, was only gradually easing his way back into live performances after an extended hiatus. All the more remarkable, then, that the chemistry between them clearly had not diminished a whit.

Still, the difference is telling. A combination that seemed brittle and dangerous in 1983 comes across as a warm family reunion in 2003. Zorn's gyrotechnic screech and Lindsay's jagged skronk prove as combustible as ever. Fier, now as then, tethers the volatile proceedings to a rock solid base. The result is an ebullient ecophony, imparting reckless joy if few surprises. Snatches of stage chatter further suggest the congeniality of this infrequent union.

And that's the part. It would be churlish to insist that Zorn continue to shed his skin as quickly and completely as he once did. At 50, he's fostering a music with an eye for longevity rather than mere impact, a more durable, less ephemeral body of work. That's true of his chamber music but this series furthers the case for his Masada songbook as well. As for the Graves encounter and *Locus Solus* bash, well, Zorn's earned the right to blow off some steam — isn't that what a party is for? □



Quiet is the new loud is the new quiet: Keiji Haino

KEIJI HAINO

'NEXT' LET'S TRY CHANGING THE SHAPE
SWOONISH FROM CO

BLACK BLUES

LES ORIGINES DU SOUL ET ACIER 06AS4489 CD

BLACK BLUES

LES ORIGINES DU SOUL ET ACIER 06AS4489 CD

Keiji Haino's trademark appearance is as constant and familiar as his music is shifting and unearthly. The worst construction you could place on the puddingbowl silver hair, the Jackie Onassis-style shades and the head-to-toe black garb, is that they're an attempt at eternal rock 'n' roll youth, an act of middle-aged vanity, immersing him against both the vagaries of fashion and visible signs of the ageing process. Another is that his appearance is deliberately morbid, as if this is the armour he must wear when sailing forth on his unending sonic investigations. Or it could be an eye-catching look of instructing you that with Haino, you have to get way past what the eye can see – it's the unmistakable look of a rocker who wants to draw you into a barely investigated third dimension of rock, where what Haino has referred to as his "impossibility" and "incompleteness" is, if not revealed, then at least intimated.

To listen to Haino, even if you're no stranger to the extremes of improv or alchemy, requires, or more excitingly, prompts a reconfiguration in the way you listen. This is something that he is trying quite deliberately to instill in his "exact" terms as he can. There's a lazy habit among conventional musicians, faced with what they see as the ineffability of rock to use language like "natural", "unplanned", "not contrived", which deflects both from their contempt for, and inability to handle artistic strategy, as well as the distinct effability of their own music. None of this for Haino. Titles like 'Next Let's Try Changing The Shape' and its predecessor 'To Start With, Let's Remove The Colour' are refreshingly, unapologetically contrived, planned, schematic, conscious. And these reconfigurations genuinely take you past rock's pitiful apparatus of showman signifiers into an unnaturally natural inner zone where you're forced to float free and rethink.

David Stubbs emerges black and blue from a soul bruising encounter with Keiji Haino's take on Blind Lemon Jefferson and more

The first reconfiguration takes place on the title track opening 'Next'. To attend to the beauty of the irregular, unrelenting, unmelodious tumble of Haino's guitar here requires that you think of it as waterfall-like. Not only does it then make sense, it transforms. Then Haino sings. To those unfamiliar, this might be an ably disconcerting experience, akin to those frankly bloody annoying accompanying hums and groans to which the late pianist Glenn Gould was wont. However, here, and on "If All Were 'I'", Haino's delivery is like a moan of sexual ecstasy, or a whimper of anguish, a noise you can't help making, which has bubbled up from deep inside when it could be contained no longer. Put another way, this isn't so much singing as the sound of the music bleeding. What must come out, comes out.

After "Surely Here Too There Is Something", where the album's natural body of music is viewed from a different angle, yielding different, more Tibetan-dramatic tones, comes "A Secret", in which Haino's first vocal utterance is, entirely coincidentally but somehow significantly, reminiscent of Roger Daltrey uttering the words "See me" on The Who's Tommy. It's a moment of tender urgency. Then, as if to stress that Haino sees himself primarily as a vocalist, comes "Is This Guidance Itself Some Kind Of Trap" (a pertinent instruction against his own instructions). It's Haino as one-man barbershop ensemble, a selection of his own multitracked voices, offset against one another, some from deep in the belly, others megaphone-induced, altogether illustrating the vitality of synthesis in Haino's world. For, as the pitifully titled "Look, Darkness And Light Both Begin To Copy Each Other/If The Process Had Not Begun Now Here Would Never Have Come To An End" demonstrates, what ultimately counts in Haino's music is the motion of the dialectical ocean.

Antithesis is ostensibly the theme of the two Black Blues albums, distinguished only by the same photo of Haino against a black and silver, triangular patterned backdrop that's flipped on the second edition. They both feature the same set of songs, performed "quietly" on the first album (06AS4489), "noisily" on the second. Only, the distinction is less clear cut than that:

On the 'quiet' album, "Black Eyes" and "I Don't Want To Know" are not exactly gentle or miniature. Rather, it's the listener who feels miniaturised, reduced to insect size, contemplating a version of Country/Blues/balladry close up, being exposed to the hitherto unknown detail of their woe and grief, or to the interface between finger and string, or to their vast whole in wholly different, more revealing proportions. There's an awesome sense of sound and space, empty yet full, the Japanese concept of 'ma', of which Haino has spoken, in effect. The tone shifts, however, with his version of Blind Lemon Jefferson's "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean", whose trance-inducing electric chimes transcend the 'quiet/loud' dichotomy.

On the 'noisy' edition of Black Blues, the same songs are rendered not so much with heavy duty rock 'n' roll amp power but with heightened urgency, as if under great duress, brought on by intense contemplation of them on the 'quiet' album. The guitars don't bluster but blower away the flesh of the songs. Haino's capacity as a vocalist is again what's most alarming here, as he absolutely shreds the lyrics, not out of petulance but as if at the prompting of red-hot pokers. But these yelps and screams don't betoken some noisily dreary notion of 'wildness' or 'losing control'. Haino, as ever, is in complete control. There's something absolutely surgical and sculpted about the agonised yelps of, say, "Town In Black Fog".

Best of all is the second version of "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean" (a showstopper on Haino's recent French tour). Again, boundaries between 'quiet' and 'loud' are blurred, as here the very buzz of the monitor is integral to the track. His vocal convulsions are piercing, soul-shredding, shattering the song like glass, it seems, into its tiniest components. He doesn't so much cover the song as uncover it, expose its strange, intangible, squirming essence.

Keiji Haino boasts of doing something even Jimi Hendrix couldn't do in his music. On these albums, he was up to that destination, tearing past the Matelike curtain of rock 'n' roll disinformation and into the metaphysical. □

voiced delivery in a fascinating manner. If he's whimsical, it's the whimsy of a shaman or an earth spirit. There's no very here, nor the emotional stivings of individualism, in fact he rises like a bubble above the concerns of mortal sergents, and his songs are despatches from his own ecstatic world. "I could take my teeth out and show them a real good time" — that kind of thing. On "See Saw" he caucuses a vocode chant like an old woman in the rain. "You young dumb n'g thing" (n'g here to get this baby dancing). We're cruising with the Brothers Grimm rather than on the Californian Interstate, but then Barhart did some of his growing up in Venezuela before he got to San Francisco.

"When The Sun Shone On Vebner" is one Barhart song title, and he performs as second guitarist and backing vocalist on Vebner's own album. Vebner is an indie grass with an anarcho rock nod in perfume and medicine, entirely appropriate for the shimmering resonances of their hitbottom music. The group — cello, violin and guitars — are a vehicle for the songs of Andy Cacic. As with Barhart solo, these San Franciscans are stepping out of their time. There's a splash of indie rock colour (My Bloody Valentine's Colin O'Cassidy drums gently on a couple of tracks), and a touch of incredible String Band, but the main feeling is a drowsy, old-time Americana, lush and a little narcotic. Delightful.

GREG BENDIAN'S INTERZONE ANATOMIC ALPINE CD BY NICK SOUTHGATE

On this album's original release in 1997, The Wire's review (Issue 158) offered guidance no more precise than "File Under: Oddities". Seven years later it sounds no less unique but perhaps rather less odd. With Interzone, Bendian departs from the reputation he had built with the likes of Oxid Taylor and Derek Bailey as a percussionist and improviser to focus his energies on the vibraphone and glockenspiel. Both are underdone curios of instruments, ill at ease with the liturgical confining of music in the lead role in any ensemble needs to be either archly ironic or insistently insouciant. The slowest tracks threaten the former, revealing the process to be tributes to cerebral Pop music's Gaudin Giant. Yet Bendian's lasting association with Prog proved instead to be inspired.

His choice of co-conspirators adds greatly to the whole. Neil Cline, in particular, provides some lethal and somewhat gaudy ("Sublute Side The Continent", while Alex Cline's percussion rides and sails around Bendian's ideas playing to striking effect on the superb opener "Courtemarshes"). Rusty rock, Prog's well-worn cliché, embraced the vibraphone and did much to familiarise as once again with its potential — and decrease its once again. Several tracks feel like offerings from the father end of post-rock, particularly Chicago's Little Evil. The fierce guitar of "Blood: Season 21" and/or the claustraphobic rifting of "Z-zones" stand out in this regard.

This album also adds live versions of two tracks ("Debate" and "Tribes") recorded six months after the original ones. The new energy and attack of both takes demonstrate that Interzone's studio process converted to the stage with impressive verve. The verdict stands time around? File Under: Essential.

BEYOND SENSORY EXPERIENCE RATAN CD CLD 021009A CD954 CD BY MARVIN LONLEY

From Uppala, Sweden, Jonas Anshelm (Drakons) and Tobias Koolmeester (K-Master) formed Beyond Sensory Experience in 2001, their aim being the amalgamation of music and science. After concluding a trilogy begun by Byrnes and Ummu, its packaging evokes a simultaneous axis of old and new experimentation, micro-circuit boards vying with images of chunkily antiquated laboratory equipment. Drakons and Koolmeester adopt a conventional linear vocabulary when approaching what is essentially Ambient music. Fortunately, this doesn't detract from the effectiveness of their brooding atmospheres. They use modified samples, guitars, synths and voices, even as they do their best to disguise original sound sources.

The first two pieces are constructed with church chimes and organ swells, heading into the ethereal distances, all Gothic textures, hazy robes, monumental drones and whispering and spitting vowels. Its ghostly, ethereal greyness suggests the apertural mood with the Industrial. "Three Enamels Head" has a dripping, volcanic coldness, its low rumblings opening up a cavernous acoustic. The swooping spatial "Future Directors" is still elaborating on the established axis. Nothing much changes over the next five tracks, with BSE increasingly capitalising on their chosen mood, though starker weather lines in "Numbers Rule The Universe". BSE keep very much within established traditions, but their reoccur streak has a convincing potency.

BLACK DICE CREATURE COMFORTS FAT CAT PRS CD BY DAVID STUBBS

Brooklyn's Black Dice have ranged widely since their late 90s inception, taking in Krautrock, dance and the more frayed fringes of neo-avant-garde. On Creature Comforts, however, they bathe exclusively in the art of acid westness in which most groups dally and dwell only briefly, before returning to base.

It's not as if Black Dice are the first musicians ever to journey into the strange. They are perhaps the 1015th visitors this week to visit the orbital sonic regions they freefloat in here, beyond the gravitational pull of conventional forms. But with Black Dice there's a sense that they are operating briefly without navigation or aird control. Imagine them in relation to Animal Collective, the latter confining rockishly around their particular campfire, deep in the forest. Black Dice sound like they've strayed way beyond the fire, deeper into the woods, foraging for mushrooms, ingested them where they stand, then lost all hope or capability of finding their way back to the warm solace of mainstreams and singjongs.

Hence, on Creature Comforts Black Dice truly sound like they don't quite know where they're going or what they're doing, if the discoveries they're making are 'leaf' or hallucinatory. This can be thrilling, unerring and just occasionally bizarre. "Interzone" is a departed amalgam of heavily generated tri-tone, whirring, whispering noises reminiscent of Ennio Morricone's Newsworld. "Dustings Tree" and what might be desperate scorpions on the inside of a crystal, yearning for

escape from a mental rock groove. It's all exacerbated by a tantalising touch of an acoustic guitar like a near distant yet elusive stream. Simulations of UFOs weaving their engines, also informs and dangerously orbiting sonic detritus around on Creature Comforts lying on a wash of quassy guitar early on, the 15 minute "Sirens" is assailed by fireflies and bothered by curious mushrooms, before drifting into a sedate, cat-combine waters. "Schwabe Schwabe" provides a minute of relative lucidity, with its auditory seasaw rill and thrbbing synth broadsides, before those mushrooms reappear. On the concluding "Night Flight", it's as if they've excited some makeshift flying machine in the hope of taking off from their point of no return, but the contraption is in danger of sinking into quiescence. Creature Comforts, then, as distressing, and daring, music without a map into space knows this is a place to which they should return.

JOHN CAGE A TRIBUTE: SONATAS AND INTERLUDES, FOUR WALLS AND OTHER PIECES ANT ADON 2XCD BY ANDY HAMILTON

Pianist Joshua Pierce has made a series of Cage recordings for the Verbo label. He now turns his attention to the earliest compositions, many of their little less, produced when Cage was aged between 20 and 35. There are several first recordings of shorter pieces, but most of this fascinating double CD is taken up with Sonatas And Interludes, and the less known Four Walls (1944), written for a 'dance play' by Merce Cunningham. Cage modified or 'impaired' a piano to act as one-person percussion unit for dance performances, and in 1946-48 created Sonatas And Interludes for the new instrument. As James Pritchett comments in his book on Cage, they show a musical and emotional range and depth missing from the composer's earlier efforts. Their beguiling sonorousness are widely alive and vibrant, and Pierce's interpretation has a leafy lightness and delicacy.

Four Walls is a dance score for conventional piano, plus a single score for solo voice sang here by tenor Robert White. After one performance, the music disappeared until the 1980s. Much of its material is surprisingly reminiscent of Copland's American pastoralism, though the repetitive structure looks forward to minimalist. Spontaneous Earth (1944) is a rare example of Cage in jazz mode. In The Game Of The Holocaust (1942) comes from a James Joyce and not the literary events then unfolding in Europe — a haunting piece that shows Cage's early mastery of prepared pieces, informed by techniques from his teacher Henry Cowell. Prelude (Piano Sextet) For Six Instruments from 1946 is rare Cage music for that gets its first recording. Music For Marcel Duchamp, for a surrealist film sequence by Duchamp, is a spare yet compelling prepared piano piece linking two key, if ambivalent, dance icons.

VINICIUS CANTUARIA HORSE AND FISH RECORDS PHONO 1498 CD BY DAVID TOLPIN

Vinicius Cantuaria has said that the jazz musician he returns to again and again are

Miles Davis, Coltrane and Bill Evans. In their time, all of them were icons of improvisation, of urbane cool, while two of them — Evans and Baker — optimised the arc of the doomed jazz interlude. I assume that, in each case, Cantuaria is drawn to a fragile balance, the way in which music and outward appearance can afflictive with fluency when a rest of the body control. In some ways, this is the draw of the jazz icon, though there is a fear of loss, or evident pain. In the past, his fragile balance has been more like two people poised at the far ends of a seesaw: gentle bassoonist center attacked by electronics or Alex Lindsay's guitar shaped contemplation. Horse And Fish is a historic affair, by comparison, a delivery of song in which all the players speak with open voices, full, rich, rounded and synchronised.

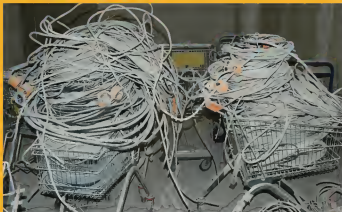
The album opens with Gilberto Gil's "Processos", an immediate nod to Brazilian music history, and Cantuaria's connection to the bossa-experiments of the Tropicalistas. The atmosphere is strongly reminiscent of John Zorn's recorded work — a fanatically careful control of each element within the acoustic space, supple but focused playing, a harmonisation between sound, structure and aura. Paul Seckman's bass line is particularly suspenseful, having the fluttering bushes, the strapping snare, of Paulo Braga's drums.

The combination of clear studio sound, spacious arrangements anchored by bass and Marcus Lush's trumpet makes me think of Marcus Miller's Miles Davis. Immediately I worried, in this, or even Cantuaria's career, heading towards a celebration of undisturbed beauty, the hand of beauty that makes us stare, fascinate and only too conscious of our own mortality?

Actually, there is subtle activity under the surface, or close to it, undermining perfection. There are astringe squeezed notes, pedal tones that draw us into the circle of the musicians, seemingly part of their concentration and emotional space. So perception of this space becomes critical. Happily, the drums are not overbearing in this sense, but rather a balance so typical of contemporary academic, virtuosic, 'real' music. Nobody is showing off, or sounding proud, like that loathsome Performance Channel style that must make attendance at jazz and Latin festivals unbearable these days.

The group are very good at floating through grooves, inside them and flat out relaxed, though the game of "Quabon Postos" comes periodically close to parody. Even here, when the horn charts begin to sound a little glib and there is little to be said that accurate cliché has not claimed as its own. The group plays with consummate intensity on "Look This Fly". Look this plays union lines as strident trumpet and a Hammond style keyboard sound so close that they merge into an inseparable squelch that's a pinch, or vice versa. The song is so cool, in all senses, that this little extra touch sends it off the refrigerator scale.

I love the way Cantuaria allows the decaying sound of the guitar to hang in the air on "Tokyo", a complex, fading merge like a slow exhalation. Lush's keyboard lines squart at the edges like tiny fish. I've reminded of John Martyn's "Small Hours", and songs that could be played for long hours. "Tom Jobson's" "Lips" is unexpectedly beautiful, of course, and played with the exquisite sensitivity it demands. Just one false step could destroy such



Getting connected: Kompakt's Cologne HQ

VARIOUS KOMPAKT 100

KOMPACT KOMPACT100 BUCHHEIM

Cologne's Kompakt was born as an attempt at consolidation. First a concept, then a record shop, and by 1998 a label proper, Kompakt gathered together the many projects, labels and aliases trafficked by a coterie of artists active in Cologne's Techno community during the 90s. Chief among them were Wolfgang Voigt, Reinhard Voigt, Jürgen Paape and Michael Meyer, who in various configurations must have racked up hundreds of pseudonyms between them. The shifting identities remained faithful to Techno's preference for anonymity but they didn't help buyers make sense of the bewildering array of projects emerging from overlapping imprints like France Atlantic, New Transatlantic, Profan, Studio 1, Freiland, and Auftrieb. Wolfgang Voigt has used well over two dozen aliases for his solo projects alone, including Mike Ink, Studio 1, Love Inc, and Mi5.

Almost no sooner had Kompakt launched, however, than it began spinning out into new sub-labels like Kompakt Pop, Kompakt Extra (which publishes the double A side series, Spoicher) and recurring releases like the annual *Pop Ambient* compilations. The label just can't seem to keep its wandering ear in check. One week it might release a dancefloor anthem strong enough to peel paint; the next it puts its imprimatur on a slip of wailing noise containing limp, beardless chimes.

This is a good thing. Although the name might suggest a certain byo-sized aesthetic, Kompakt has strayed increasingly far from the stereotypical minimal Techno with which it was once affiliated. A tenuous balance between compression and expansion keeps Kompakt interesting, both as an aesthetic and a work ethic. Commemorating its 100th release, Kompakt 100 mines the label's core producers to remix a favourite track from the back catalogue, Part showcase, part retrospective, the results offer something like a scan of the label's nervous system, mapping the tensions between blasted out and all out, between pop and pummel, between vertically organised sound, clustered into neat rows of pistons, and a hazy, hypodermic sprawl.

As a collective curation, the tracklist alone is pretty fascinating. While a few of the label's bona fide anthems got reworked – Closer Musik's "One Two Three (No Gravity)", Superpitcher's "Tomorrow" – many of the tunes are obscure little cuts, and quite often Ambient ones at that. Döttinger and Ulf Lohmann both prove particularly popular choices, perhaps because their drifting, churning studies can be turned in so many ways.

With 21 tracks ranging from industrial strength wallop to Justus Köhncke's buzzy, sing-songy Pfandremix – turning Wolfgang Voigt's lumbering circus stomp into a campy amalgam of Glitterbeat and the naïf German pop called Schlager – it's hard to know where to begin, really. The Kompakt fan is likely to lunge straight for the tracklisting, as I have, but for the novice the real pleasures will reside in the sounds and rhythms themselves. God has always lurked in the details on Kompakt releases: in the brittleness of a handclap sample run backwards, say, or the particular space that opens up around beats, like the air pockets in bubbly wrap. Ambient music, of course, has always been about tone for tone's sake, about lushness and the perfection of sound itself, and beaust tracks by The Orb and Ulf Lohmann are suitably gorgeous. As Kompakt's producers know how to take Ambient music's reverence for sound and apply it to the most muscular drum kit. It's a Midas touch, a gift for finding the sublime in shards of sonic leftovers.

The intermingling of voices is unpredictable and astonishing. As Wiesemann, Wolfgang Voigt takes a gritty cleaners-and-spectulas rhythm attack from his brother Reinhard's "Robson Ponte" and wraps it in giddy chords taken straight from Wolfgang's own revues. It's unlikely that anyone outside the family would recognise the prickly pring underneath, even though the elder Voigt leaves it all but intact. The makeover's as jarring as plastic surgery on reality TV. For his part, Reinhard Voigt's megamix of Closer Musik's highlights plays less like an edit than a mesh note, a love letter in which Voigt swoons so dully that he actually gets his beats out of sync – a detail that makes for one of the album's most exhilarating, avant garde moments

Philip Sherburne celebrates a mammoth commemorative remix collection from Cologne's premier Techno label

Ulf Lohmann's original "Because" layered pring, ride cymbals over a monochromatic chug; its melody is the coloured flash of a bird hopping between branches in a thickly leaved tree. In The Orb's hands, it is spread into a long, brushing blur. Thomas/Mayer tease out the melody with a punchy, four-to-the-floor framework. Oddly, by clipping its wings and plomg it into a cage of staccato chimes like struck bamboo, they give it flight.

Orb collaborator Thomas Fehrmann's undulating "Radeln" pictured a thousand shades of psalmophone – or pink or yellow, depending upon your synaesthetic key – burbling in an undersea landscape, where jellyfish ring like bells. Sascha Funke's version, though, emphasises only single blips and pings, which he strings into a taut Techno sequence stretched like a steel bridge over a great, murky void.

And so on, and so on. Every track contains multitudes. Set your disc player on Shuffle – not Schaffel, the lumbering, off-kilter form Kompakt has popularised, though there are a few of those tracks here as well – and the compilation turns into a kind of labyrinth with no dead ends, where each rhythm and each tone feed into a new, but maddeningly familiar, passageway.

As a longstanding but hardly uncritical fan of the label, my first response to the compilation was a kind of frustration. Why stop here, I thought? Why not ask every Kompakt artist to mix every Kompakt track in a remix free-for-all? Utterly impossible, of course, but to tend a garden of forking paths and then rope off half the walkways is almost cruel. However, after a few dozen plays, every cut on the album now sounds like something I've been hearing for years, regardless of whether I recognised the sources or not; and yet each new listen still opens up onto a vista I hadn't seen before. It's as though Kompakt had addressed the very limits of the project by engineering tracks that would evolve over time. The compilation may not be titled Total 100, in the spirit of Kompakt's annual *Total* compilation series, but as a cross-section of the world's most inventive Techno label, it's as close to totality as you're going to get. □

a performance, of such a song, but the energy is all centered in the right place, low and solid, to anchor its lightness, and every small production effect and percussive comment is clear, discrete and what Miles Davis would call "tight like fire." After the final track, there are small sounds, like traces melting into the air, after the room has emptied.

CHRIS CUNDEY & JAMES DUNN GRACE & DELETE

OGC-96 OGC-445, CD

BY BEN WATSON

This debut between bass clarinet and circuit-bent Casio SKI sampler was recorded at the Fritville Pump Room in Cheltenham in January 2003. As one might expect, the music has some of that cold silence which pervades classical music institutions, and which is so repellent to ears used to the generic bustle of jazz and pop. However, the musicians use an aspect of classical ritual to their advantage, which is its staged singularity of performance. With so much issued music has become selling access to celebrity rather than a significant act in itself—the major influence of free music's reduction of music to the musician, the free jazz grog, the improviser games—Cundy and Dunn just put everything they can do into one CD.

The musicians are fully in control of their pitches and the music often proceeds by finding a harmony and then forcing it into crisis, unbearable tensions resolved into rhythmic exchange. Cundy also uses a Tritus Analogue to detect notes and elevate them to audibility. This provides the musicians with a stimulating randomness—the difference between the unexpected shapes generated by looking and drawing rather than simply doodling and reproducing habit, the essence.

Ero Dolyph's example or bass clarinet allows Cundy to exploit the natural resources of the instrument: its old-fashioned wood-powdered femoral, the humour of its duck cacks, the urban urgency of its sinuous high tones. Dunn's electronics are a masterpiece in the resources of outdated technology. After being exposed to so much laptop tinkering, the ear appreciates the SKI's limits. They give Dunn's contributions a jagged starkness, like coming upon a crude screenshot in an exhibition of digital printouts. It's possible that both musicians are a little too rigidly to force the music into a contradiction that might only as hour's performance. However, the quiet care and intensity in the way they listen to each other is really touching.

DAT POLITICS OG PETS GO

CHICKEN ON SPOT COGNAC'S CD

BY KEN HOLLINGS

Things have fallen together nicely on the fifth album from Northern France's top literary odd couple. Although based in the serious party town of Lille, the last stop on Eurostar before you hit Brussels, Dat Politics have spent the past two years touring intensely and it shows in the scattered coherence and neatly warped sides contained within this short, sharp and entirely personal collection. Not only does the rhythm sectionally follow by constant performance show through in the raw material, clear discipline in the looped, rhythmic delivery of "Tok" and "This Way," but there's also a growing international feel to it, with tracks recorded in

Berlin and Tokyo. There are contributions also from digital folkies Nathan Michel and Kristin Erickson, whose bang interruptions help to keep the cheery cynicism of "No Rantale," with its shapeshifted voices declaiming imbecile platitudes, properly grounded.

As style and sonic densities continue to slip and collide throughout, with shards of noise and emotive vocals bounding off each other in an emotionally controlled state of chaos, it's hard not to be impressed by how well Dat Politics keep a handle on the proceedings. Don't be fooled by the fuzzy free-savvy nature of the presentation—their are several strategies hard at work beneath the synthetic diaphanous surface of each song. Too often these days the merely quirky gets passed off as the truly daring; that's not the case here. The unpretentious array of the instruments—"Cat Puk" and "Nico Rainbow" redresses a firm structural foundation to some of their wider formal directions, such as the tripartite spoken records on the final track. It takes quite a few trials and even some errors to create something as rich and original as this.

BABY DODDS TALKING & DRUM SOLOS

UNHEARD MUSIC SERIES WASTIC ALPH-41 CD

BY BRIAN MORRIS

All the major evolutions in jazz—bebop and the New Thing included—have come not from the drums men and piano players but from the drummers. The little sottohanding, the bulk of this remarkable disc consists of 10-year-old recordings of County brass bands, originally released on Folkways. They're remarkable not so much for their rawness and harmonic approximation as for the entire absence of anything that resembles jazz rhythm. Foremost in the complex chemistry of the music recorded in the Caribbean influenced drumming of New Orleans was a man who in his own words went "through the mill," playing everything from peds to street drums, to orchestra gags and show wails, to a credit on some of the most important jazz records ever made.

Warren "Baby" Dodds was the percussionist on Louis Armstrong's Hot Sevens recordings, which are inscribed on the unconscious of modern American music. The younger brother of saxophonist Johnny Dodds, Baby was arguably the more influential musician, bestowing an approach to the drum kit that can still be heard in the work of modernists like Billy Higgins, Joey Baron and Ben Benkart (who, as Kevin Whitehead points out in his sleeve-note, pitched Baby's method of changing the tuning of his four toms with a raised foot). More than anyone, though, Dodds's heir is the late Tony Williams, not just by virtue of his precocity—driving the Miles Davis Quintet at the age of 17—but because, like Baby, he made the whole kit sound musical, an integrated instrument rather than a collection of rattles.

That comes across here on "Spooky Dams 1 & 2" (a title modestly borrowed by Benkart on one of his own solo recordings), where Baby plays out his repertoire of precociously demonstrated press rolls, cymbal and woodblock accents, riffs and bells, where he would hit gongs and rams simultaneously with precision, ferocity and wit. They are magnificent performances and some of the best solo percussion you'll ever hear. Spooky not just in technique, but because it was an odd

experience for the 48-year-old Dodds to find himself alone in a recording studio. He was trapped there in 1946 by engineer Fred Ramsey. Though the war was over, bombs were still falling as pop rewrote the drummer's role one more time. Baby set up with his old snare drum, acquired even before the Armstrong sessions, three toms, cymbals, cowbells, a tim-tim tin, casket and a mixture of sack rattles and 48 sticks. Almost as important as his playing and Ramsey's expert documentation (how many drummers of that or any other period were so well served?) is their recorded conversation about drumming in the 20s. Baby's comments on the differences between playing with Joe Oliver and Louis Armstrong (basically a difference between boss and frenzied) and on the slowed-down blues led by Bunk Johnson's pre-rewind groups are like basic grammar lessons for jazz fans and players alike. He comes across as neither naive nor all-knowing and world-weary (but like a professional), which for all his demotions he consummately was.

Switching to the cubs by the Legacy and Lanville-Johnson Union Brass Bands is like being served through a time warp and back to some unimpressed even before the much mythologized Buddy Bolden made his horn cry out across Lake Pontchartrain. These are classic roots recordings of a music that is not yet either ecstatic or capable of introspection. The players wield a selection of rag and bone instruments, ancient conical bone sashons and palm-beater tasses. Their despair is just one sign that even in a weak control Louisiana that hasn't changed very significantly since antebellum 1854, this is a music with a marginal existence. The Lanville-Johnson outfit is the remnant of two disbanded groups. If bebop has dented the Dodds recording, rock 'n' roll is just around the corner for the kids who might once have driven from Greenwood to listen to guys like these at a county fair or street parade.

These recordings offer the past as it should be—grubby, functional, not gleaming with false glamour or artfully dressed the way most early histories of jazz are. If you have a relative who recently succumbed to the jazz historian's two classic diseases, influenza keratoconjunctivitis or wyrtoria infestiosa, here at last is succour.

DOUBLE LEOPARDS UNRAVEN CONCUSSION

ORICO IS LP

BY MARK MATTERS

Though their previous releases were impressively dense, last year's *Have Moon* felt like Double Leopards' defining moment, a missive home that swallowed every pettish bit of this Brooklyn quartet's growly drone. Unravens, a beautifully titled package disc on Italian label Orico, at first seems smaller in scope. It's limited to 30 copies, 32 minutes in length, and coated with a glowing Graham Landrum artwork that's so eye-catching it's tempting to hang the record on the wall without ever placing it under the needle. But once the stylus hits, *Unravens* is as overbearing and gravitational as its predecessor.

Side one begins with a warped hum and some intermittent clacking, resembling Morse code from a distant star. Low spoken words echo in the background, combining with wailing feedback and busy arpeggios to create the feel of a hallucinatory rain storm. *Unravens*, Double Leopards' power rises with amplification and score size, but here they prove equally adept at



Carlos Giffoni / Lee Ranaldo / Jim O'Rourke
March Six

AMMO / USGRO

The first release in *Ammo's* Love Series is a settling, evening sort of power electronics and guitar with heady, a screaming of the past. This recording leads the trio of Carlos Giffoni (computer, synth, guitar), Lee Ranaldo (guitar, feedback) and Jim O'Rourke (bass) in discussing form. The recently released *Ammo's* *Love Series* is a settling, evening sort of power electronics and guitar with heady, a screaming of the past. This recording leads the trio of Carlos Giffoni (computer, synth, guitar), Lee Ranaldo (guitar, feedback) and Jim O'Rourke (bass) in discussing form. The recently released *Ammo's* *Love Series* is a settling, evening sort of power electronics and guitar with heady, a screaming of the past. This recording leads the trio of Carlos Giffoni (computer, synth, guitar), Lee Ranaldo (guitar, feedback) and Jim O'Rourke (bass) in discussing form.

Love Series



Sakata
Never Give Up On The Margins Of Logic
AMMO / USGRO

For London's Festival of the City Festival, the Sakata's members in a big band recording. Unravens, the biggest the trio, is a settling, evening sort of power electronics and guitar with heady, a screaming of the past. This recording leads the trio of Carlos Giffoni (computer, synth, guitar), Lee Ranaldo (guitar, feedback) and Jim O'Rourke (bass) in discussing form. The recently released *Ammo's* *Love Series* is a settling, evening sort of power electronics and guitar with heady, a screaming of the past. This recording leads the trio of Carlos Giffoni (computer, synth, guitar), Lee Ranaldo (guitar, feedback) and Jim O'Rourke (bass) in discussing form.

Love Series

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MATERIAL

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RICHARD RIMAC
BLOCK BEUYS

limiting its dimensions, gaining speed as gradually it lies watching technobut grass grow. 15 minutes in, a hollow roar slides into a beam of treble, then decays into a grittyumble akin to a fuzzy needle stuck happily on a groove.

Side two is more open and reezy, with distinct notes more prevalent than heavy drones. Ping-ponged bleeps, papered whines and shades of abrasion all push and shove. While the range of sounds hardly soars through the track's 14 minutes, the permutations are headscratchingly unpatterned. Like a simple mathematical exercise that accidentally creates infinity inside a box. But Double Loops can never stop too far from dream, and Urban Consciousness ends by immersing the listener in a planet-sized seascape that this stellar group seems to have patented.

ERRORSMITH NEAR DAWN DISCO (LIVE RECORDINGS 2001-2003) BY ERRORSMITH DISCOGRAPHY CD

BY DEREK RAMSLEY

A perennial problem for electronica is how to create music on impulse rather than in predefined sequence. Once machines are programmed, how can one throw a spanner in the works? Customisable software rather than hardware boxes have provided part of the solution, with artists like Autechre abusing the popular Logic program until it is near unrecognisable. Now two recordings by Germany's *Art Wiegand* as *Errorsmith* shows the human side of the solution - the duo to get hands dirty with the raw materials of techno, to throw boots and loops around and see where the pieces land.

Errorsmith's sounds are substantially derived from the battle-ready arsenal of techno - Old School hi-hats like pressurised gas, distorted beats from a dusty old LFO tape. The reverent experiments of the *Errorsmith 2* album, which stretched space with the same manic glee with which jungle stretched time, create a sensation akin to being smelted around a metal box.

While the four-to-the-floor tracks evoke the classical idea of the *Four Seasons* (Bach), *Errorsmith* is both jazz and 'on the fly' restructuring introduces surprise intrusions akin to improv. Last *Dance* is a hectic interchange of attacks and counters within a sub-bass/groove fusion. The version of 'in A Sweet' that closes the album retains a tangible funkiness, despite a skipping nervous tic, suggesting Prefuse 73 adopting a techno style.

In these split seconds, cracks appear in *Errorsmith*'s brutal techno structure, already honed to lethal perfection on two previous albums. The disintegration of the moment is what *Art House* was all about. In *Errorsmith*'s hands, each moment is an opportunity for surprise and impulsive rhythmic invention.

THE ETERNALS RAWAR STYLE AESTHETICS A0376 CD

BY DEREK RAMSLEY

Chicago trio The Eternals comprise ex-Ten-in-mouth members Damien Lewis and Wayne Montrose, with drumming responsibilities recently passed from Britain's Johnny Henshaw to drummer 5 starturn Tim McInerney. Their recent Out of Urban Eros EP was a hazardous package of urban roids spiced with vocal Laika cat as the persecuted city dweller,

dozing police vans and fading in doorways against a dense backdrop of Lee Perry bass 'n' phase and Funkadelic tangents.

Rawar Style uses this sonic palette across an ambitious ego-pop canvas, applying blobs of raves, funk, hip-hop and post-rock with impetuous glue. Album opener proper 'Anxiety' is a tougher version of the Out Of Proportion track, its apocalyptic swaggle powered by a powerful drum that dunks and dunks mercilessly. 'Sweet Danceshall' then bleeps and bleeps into life, exploding into a furious 'H*E*E*E*E*E' meets *Specials* storm. Looks attempts a metaphorical social commentary in a Big Mouth style, while the middle eight features itchy space keyboard dials that sound like Thelma Houston getting his hands on Herbie Hancock's synths. 'Bewareness' rides a fluid bass/percussion orchestra rhythm section harking from late 70s African pop, while loud soundscapes drum in the background.

Reflecting Damien Lewis's artwork, they lyrics are broad graffiti splashing with occasional lapses into bewildered despair. 'Disorder, how do you respond to that? How do you shine when eyes are burning?' Elsewhere, they display a different sort of emptiness, partying away without a care. As a political manifesto, *Rawar Style* is somewhat vague, yet The Eternals' impulsive, improvising music has anger, zeal and humour in its very DNA, deploying all the sonic weapons at their command in a mission against political apathy. If these nookie canvases could throw a narrative through the dark divine scenarios, they could be on a mission for real.

MORTON FELDMAN EARLY & UNKNOWN PIANO WORKS BY GREGG BROWN MP3C0110725202 CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

Digging around among the sins of their youth doesn't always do composers favours. This survey of Feldman's juvenilia starts in 1943 and it shows a composer who's already pitting himself against the moieties of academic composition. His First Piano Sonata (1943, Bala Bartok) was written when he was 17 and still a part of the traditionally minded Wellingford Riegner. A sparsely hammered chord provides the opening dramatic gesture and, remarkably, it doesn't sound too far removed in spirit from the chord that introduces *Two Pieces For Three Pianos* (1966), the most recent work to be heard here. The sonata then progresses into a ragged structure that zigzags with the flow of material chased by a table yet synthetically constructed to piano writing.

Structure as such and a highly refined ear for textural timbre were to become Feldman's calling card, and even the sonata's subtle despondencies that long before For John Cage and For Christian Wolff, Feldman was already referencing the most avant garde classical sounds to be heard in New York. The basic language of the piece owes much to Bartok (obviously), Scriabin and perhaps a hint of Berg. When he discovered abstract expressionism and Cage, Feldman would ditch such obvious borrowings, but the early sonata is full of textures that he would later develop. The second piano work, *Two Shorter Pieces*, Prelude (1944) and Self Portrait (1946), find him getting to grips with the basics of counterpoint and he manages even this chase

with a light touch and imaginative resources. Belonging to Feldman's mature period, the remaining three items - *Three Canons* (1950), the untuned *Three Pieces For Cello and Two Pianos For Three Pianos* (1956) - for various reasons have been forgotten. Three Canons chimes with wily little motives of notes, while the 40-second dedication to his first wife, for Cynthia, is a jolly Salsa-like miniature. Both are unrelenting folkdrums, but the *Two Pieces For Three Pianos* is a seriously neglected masterpiece. Previously unrecorded and not even mentioned in the catalogue of Feldman's published works, it is one of those transitional pieces that transforms the search of early Feldman onto the bigger canvases typical of his late music. Her pianist Debora Petrina overblows the three parts to produce a soundscape with an oddly twisted and squashed perspective that seems an appropriate response to Feldman's asphyxiated textures.

LUC FERRARIO LUC ANECDOTES GUB ROSA 00507 CD

BY PHIL FREEMAN

Initially, *Luc Anecdotes* seems rather a thin proposition. After all, isn't it just some guy walking around, and taping what he hears for later consumption by others? And thus, isn't the old question (dating back at least to Marcel Duchamp) being raised once again - just how ordinary can something be, and still be transformed into art by recontextualisation? Any attempt at an answer must be prefaced by throwing *Luc Anecdotes* in a Desman and wandering around the neighbourhood for a while. The experience is thrilling and disorientating at once. The CD contains archives of dialogue in Spanish, French and German (being a monolingual American actually helps here, it allows for pure listening, without attempting to follow conversational threads), and some English, recorded at least partly without the subjects' knowledge and/or consent.

Ferrario slices up the mundane activities and quietens the noise of these selected struggles and conversations with sounds of unknown origin or of his own creation. A group of Spanish tourists wandering through a museum are shadowed by an Einsteindude Neuland-like thesizing that grows louder, then fades away only to attack again without warning. Tapes of a construction site are manipulated until they sound like a catastrophic building collapse - crew members' voices sound distinctly panicked. Bala Twitter from one headphones to the other. Motifs repeat and specific voices and phrases occur many times, giving the disc some continuity and the feel of a suite. This quality imposed context is what, finally, determines *Luc Anecdotes*' beauty revealing Ferrario's brilliance.

FLINN-EISENBECK-WREN KEEP THE METER RUNNING 9 WINGS NW046-02 CD

BY BEN WATSON

Despite all the accommodations currently being offered to radical practices in music - neo-minimalism, noise-making, installation ambience, focus on noise rather than structure, spectacular genre headbanging - the most radical of all remains noise - the ornamentals of Cecil Taylor keep tripping up business as usual. Stephen Flinn leads Cecil Taylor (along with Lol Cochrill, Gail Brand,

Major Woods and 14 others) as part of his "preraphaelite history," and the music of this trio repeats categorization with some of Taylor's expansive fury.

Flinn grew up in Seattle and worked for two years as a newspaper and DJ in Dublin. In 1995 he lived as a forest monk in Thailand. From 1995 to Los Angeles, active as percussionist who has used over 400 different pieces of metal, plastic and wood and as a bassist. His percussive attack transcends the distinction between jazz and hip-hop. Despite the fact CD release 2 1/2 for *A Lovely 7 in 2000*, Tony Olcott's contribution to Taylor's posterity has been undervalued. Flinn is evidence that American drummers are beginning to recall that tribal serialism is the suspension bridge between funk and abstraction — what Big Bill Catlett knew, what Peter Erskine forgot.

Gustaf Bruce Ebenell, born in Chicago in 1963, made a mark with *New Wings* in 1997, showing he had understood harmonies, the proposal that every parameter of the musical concept be spontaneously juggled in the same instant. His ecological violence and humor in this trio is a tone, the guy who's so good, he doesn't need to show it all the time. Tony Wren, the bassist who has returned to the British scene after too long an absence, is a practical illustration of the way that Taylor's hot methodology can unfreeze the stand-off between US free jazz and European improv.

When music making is this old and it refuses the commodity illusion of generic label. Savoring details and robust ideas suggest the anti-banal ritualism of *The Dead*, but critical tension between the players subverts pretension at every split second. Keep *The Motor Runners* presents us with an unexpected way of peering our fingers and tapping our feet, which is about as revolutionary as music can actually get.

GÅL HAINAUS: IN DEN, WALD KUNSTHAUS 05052 CD BY BRIAN MARLEY

In *Hainaus: In Den, Wald*, Bernhard Gål has based his sound art composition on the Art first work of Adolf Wölfli. The title can be translated simply as *Out In The Woods*, but the idiosyncratic punctuation in the original is characteristic of Wölfli's artistic productions — nothing is quite as straightforward as it seems. Swiss citizen Wölfli (1864-1930) was imprisoned in 1895 for sexually molesting three young girls. Because of his hallucinations and violent behavior, he was diagnosed as schizophrenic and transferred to the Waldau Psychiatric Clinic near Bern. After a decade in the asylum he began to write and draw, and the drawings quivered. His fantastical but essentially autobiographical works, seen in number, gave the general title of *St. Adal* — *Gant* — *Creation*, were made during the last 22 years of his life, all spent in captivity.

Wölfli's texts were of particular interest to Gål, especially the songs and poems whose opening lines often make sense (of sorts) before rapidly descending into incoherent gibberish but which to Wölfli must have been in some way significant. The rhythms and rhythmically repetitive nature of these utterances, both of specific meaning and their universal, their expressive, incommunicability, form the basis of Gål's nine part composition. The only voices to be heard are Gål's and that of a young Taiwanese girl.

Stellie Kao, sometimes multiplied, treated electronically or spatially repositioned. As Kao has no understanding of German, she records the repositioned words without inflection, and Gål follows suit. Apart from sporadic bedfalls, almost the only other sounds to be heard are closely mixed panning, and twigs and leaves being crunched underfoot, as Gål walks and runs through the woods.

The installation from which *Hainaus: In Den, Wald* derives was premiered in 2001 at the Museum East, lower Austria, in a darkened room. For domestic purposes, Gål again recommends darkness. He also advises the use of headphones, which gives the listener the feeling of inhabiting Wölfli's mind. Wölfli's darkness and the sense of being driven (the running, the panning), his broken words that sometimes seem like lamentation ("Waldau"), and his comments (Kao's repetitions) add up to an enneting but fascinating experience. Since in his negation, Wölfli died repeating only that he had failed to write the nearly 3000 songs that would constitute the final part of his autobiography. Bernhard Gål may have touched on only a fragment of Wölfli's glistening project, but it's a telling one.

GANG GANG DANCE GANG GANG DANCE FUSIONTRIP FUSIONTRIP BY MARG MASTERS

The art rock underground in Brooklyn is always percolating, but lately there's something sizzling in the wells, considering the brilliantly disparate sounds of Signposts, Animal Collective, Double Lopsides, Excepter, Mouthus, all the outsider outfits on the Space Is No Place compilations and so much more. Gang Gang Dance just might be the tip of this sky-high scene. This LP their first official release (aside from last year's super-limited *Revival Of The Shitstet* CD-R), is an absolute mindbender, two sizzling tracks of elongated vocals, 3D percussion, electronic breakdowns and skin-scratching noise. While Brian DeGraw and Tim Dewitt spent the late 90s pursuing helium into the clouds, and underappreciated post-punk outfit The Chameleons, and Josh Diamond previously pinch-hit for Jackie-O Motherfucker, no one could have predicted the bring originality of their new ensemble.

Gang Gang Dance begins with the means of the quartet's other conspires, *Le Bouillottes*. Warty spiky sounds and sharp snare slaps dart around the group's vocal calecthemes, forging a cacophony of paired sounds that tantalizingly refuses to solidify. Halfway through side one, a half-song emerges, alternating Borns-like rhythm with a staccato bass/piano chord. But as soon as GGD's raucous char starts to rock, the splatter melts into a sparkling, spiky keyboard loop that's all glitter and defiance, the aural equivalent of a planetarium projected on the back of one's eyelids. The side ends with an obsessive mechanical rhythm that sounds like sandpaper rubbing itself to sleep.

Side two is more disjointed, with ghosts of the early Residents and their camp-inspired fog emerging through the group's warped nursery rhyme. It ends with two half-second crescendos of phrasing drums, sea-shore winds, and thick guitar shreds. The group's ability to organically seed their free-forming soundscapes makes the album's seamless flow attain the shapely logic of a dream.

MICHAEL GIRA I AM SINGING TO YOU FROM MY ROOM YOUNG GUNS NO NUMBER CD BY MIKE BARNES

The title of this album — which is only available from Gira's www.younggunsrecords.com Website — is as descriptive rather than poetic. It was mostly recorded in Gira's office on the DAT. It's almost impossible to listen to this intimate solo account set without peering Gira in the mind's eye. It sounds like he looks, from the intimidating death's head expression, through to his tastefully austere tailoring and that smoke weathered voice dried out by endless cagers.

Gira's lyrics include allusions to pestilence, death, suffers songs, an avenging angel in "Destroy" and the haunting, unflinching characters of "Michael's White Nights". It's tempting to surmise that he is tapping into folk archetypes. One pictures the sharp suit and haunted face of early 20th century Country blues singer Bob Dylan, to whom Gira bears a passing physical resemblance, and his songs of betrayal and murder. But Gira is undeniably of his age, sophisticated and urbane.

I Am Singing to You is a gripping series of songs and wordless song sketches. However, rather than giving any new insight into Gira's work, it demonstrates what has united all of it since the earliest Swans recordings like "Raping A Slave". Namely, his gravitas. The characteristic earnestness of his delivery makes a song like "Birds" intensely moving, while the acoustic setting of "All Lined Up" — previously recorded by Swans and Gira solo — sounds as powerful in its own way as any full blown group rendering of his songs. As if anticipating this reaction is the listener, Gira then includes a section of a more melancholic live take on "All Lined Up" by his group Angels Of Light.

From here on in, the tone changes markedly. If much of what preceded it was Gira balled down to his essence, in a disarming mood, the final slush of songs were written for Rosalee and Julian, the "delightful daughters" of two friends. Of them, "Cracked Milk" is a nursery rhyme-like and lyrical ode, while "When Monster Mike" has you peering Gira with plastic fringe, capering around the searing girls. It's difficult not to listen to this without cradling a smile — not a motion usually associated with Gira's work.

PHILIP GLASS 800 LINES COLUMBIA TRIESTE CD BY PHILIP CLARK

Completed in 1974, Philip Glass's masterpiece *Musik in Twelve Parts* represented a summation of his long duration structural strategies and harmonic tricks that his reach multiplied composer had accrued during the previous decade. When the history books are written, the two 1968 pieces — *600 Lines* and *How Now* — so the superb disc by the Italian ensemble Alter Ego will be viewed as important stepping stones. Glass himself describes the challenge he was facing during this period as "extending and developing" the music he had begun in 1965 based on repetitive and cyclic structures" while thick guitar shreds. The group's ability to organically seed their free-forming soundscapes makes the album's seamless flow attain the shapely logic of a dream.

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With the first bounce leaping off of 600 lines to its answering phrase plished over the ensemble, it's immediately obvious how skilfully Alter Ego has this music under their fingers. The music swings with the tightness and breathless momentum of Count Basie's brasses and reeds, and the performance highlights the extent to which Glass inserted a sensation of pulse and energy that had little in common with the classical norm. What 600 lines hadn't yet developed is the thickness of harmonic control that emerged only a few years later. Here the music spins magically around its tonic, not able to deal in the wittily abrupt gear changes and shiftings of key that Glass would weave into *Another Look At Harmony* and *Twelve Parts*. How how is less ambitious, based on the alternation of pulsing mads with staccato intermissions by flute and high strings. Again, it foregrounds the intense conversations between instrumental groupings characteristic of later Glass, adding to the sense that this disc offers valuable sides of his prehistory.

DAVID GRUBBS
A GUESS AT THE RIDDLE
FAT CAT PATCOOP CO/VP
BY NICK SOUTHGATE

A Guess At The Riddle could serve as an apt summation of David Grubbs's musical odyssey. It's mostly recorded with a 'classic' rock guitar/bass/drums line-up with occasional cameo from Alice White and electronics contributions from Matmos. The ride is more serene evocatively wordwise, and Grubbs's latest goals are a straightforward one, but the results are sublime.

Grubbs returns to the dynamics of post-hardcore electric guitar playing with a thrilling purity of execution and insight. Indeed, the production values are uncannily close to post-hardcore benchmark groups such as early Dinosaur Jr, Pavement and Bob Mould's brace of solo albums between *Hikari* 00 and *Sugar*. The brittle coloring of the guitar combined with the loathing sincerity of Grubbs's vocals gives every song an intimacy and hugging sense of instant recognition. The album's opening ruse of "The Nauphyte" turn with dark effordlessness to intensity and split gracefully back again. The opening "Night Emot" is world-weary yet exhilarating as Grubbs sings "I'll choose the red/I'll choose whatever's next." The contribution of Matmos is most evident in the instrumental "Rose Rue" and the tender defiance of the preening "You'll Never Love Me". Grubbs's other collaborator here is a cult artist Rick Moody with whom he plays in the Wargame Community Singers, and who contributes lyrics to "Wave Disturbance" and "Muscane Season".

Grubbs's reputation is rightly based on his contribution to a tradition of eclectic and experiment, something he gestures to here with a cover of Mayo Thompson's "Magnificence As Such". However, on the evidence of *A Guess At The Riddle* we should hope that Grubbs the songwriter is heard from much more in the future.

A HAWK AND A HACKSAW
A HAWK AND A HACKSAW
USA BARS CD
BY MAX CLARKE

Ex-Neutral Milk Hotel drummer Jeremy Barnes is accustomed to working in various locations. Having left Leicester to return via Prague to

hometown Albuquerque, he has periodically overcome logistical challenges for the sake of his many musical commitments, be it with Chicago's free jazz the Baboon, or his continuing involvement with Athens, Georgia's Elephant 6 collective. His one man band, A Hawk And A Hacksaw, began in 2000 and most of his self-titled debut was recorded in a makeshift garage studio in Summit, France, with occasional trips to the US and Norway turning up some spontaneous collaborations.

Barnes simultaneously employs drums, whistles, vocals, and bells, but the dominant instrument in the accordion, it carries many of the main melodies, as its sweeping cascades fall over intricate piano scales and analogue drippings of field recordings. A Hawk And A Hacksaw was, Barnes says, greatly inspired by his surroundings in rural France. His claim is borne out on tracks such as "All Along The Ride", with its electronically manipulated birdsong, and "Mammillaries", introduced by a gurgling cockle.

Barnes's confident middle of Eastern European folk influences and reworking rhythms set in informal yet precise structures have a somewhat understated charm. The jarring samples of machinery in "We Dusk" buckle perfectly alongside a desperate, dainty piano allegro, recalling the metallic tundra of Björk's "Frost" (from *Homemade*, 2001). Though Barnes's piano maps up more human sounds of sound, French composer Jacques Tati gets a swerving in "Quasi Le Son Desvent", later La Grange En La Mer, and the spontaneous matras on track with Derrick Almond, called "With Our Thoughts We Make The World", as a real treat, unravelling with a brilliant sense of what would well be a ring of imitated monkeys. Barnes's often breathtaking compositions trace a peculiar darkness lurking beneath the blossoming melodies. It is this shadow side of A Hawk And A Hacksaw that eventually takes the upper hand, nipping the prettiness of first impressions sharp, and satisfying, in the bud.

GLENN JONES
THIS IS THE WIND THAT BLOWS IT OUT
STRANGE ATTRACTORS AUDIO HOUSE
SAAH24 CD

STEFFEN BASHO-JUNGHANS
7 BOOKS
STRANGE ATTRACTORS AUDIO HOUSE
SAAH201 CD

BY DAVID REEMAN
The mer of angling steel flows endlessly on. This is The Wind That Blows. It is a set of solos for six and 12 string acoustic guitar from Cal De Sa's Glenn Jones, modernist remappings of the topographical conceptions of American frontiersmen like John Fahey, Robbie Basho, Jesse Fuller and Charles Ives.

Jones has long been working such thematic material into the weave of Cal De Sa's music, starting with the heavy take on Fahey's "The Portland Cement Factory At Monolith, California" that graced their 1991 debut album *Eon* and continuing with 1997's *The Epiphany Of Glenn Jones*. Along with his solid grounding in pre-war guitar songwriting, his finger style reflects a voracious knowledge of a host of intriguing parallel worlds. These include rhythms of Lute-Influenced plume that trail the wide open spaces of the

music of Bola Sete through Concertino road rhytmes, bear bottle dances and fanfares of pure Yankee doodle.

Here his gorgeous, luminous settings are scored across a series of open tunings, which he threads with beautiful rolling melodies, his slide work sounding like the flutter of tiny metal butterflies. Throughout the set, he builds solo dynamics by counting long playing lines of song with soft ascending basslines that ask like weighted pianos. Following singer Jack Rose turns up for an alternative take on the duo's "London Avenue Storm" (a version of what also appears on Rosa's *Two Dimensions* CD.) and he also has a song dedicated to him, the band-leading "Dre Jack Rose (That I Mean)". That Jones' "Fahey's Car" is the highlight, a triumphal sonnet that joggles the 'ghost tones' and hymnal tuning of Jesse Fuller's sanctified 1950s recordings to exhilarating effect. Definitely one of the best of the recent decade.

German guitarist Steffen Basho-Jungmans is another player committed to navigating the various tributaries first signposted by the early 1960s pioneers. Parallel to his excursions in homage, Jungmans's most interesting work comes out of another, almost antithetical tradition, the contrarian impulse towards disavowing and reinventing approaches to traditional instrumentation which band expression in German labels like RVP and vanguard composers like Virgini mid-70s Guitar Sols series. 7 Books is drawn from this more challenging side of his work, a concept album based on an epic vision of universal birth and evolution.

Operating under various musical beds is one of Jungmans's central strategies, knitting his technique in order to bring focus to his invention. Here it mostly sounds as if he's playing unlearned, deriving solos of linear riffs from an acoustic 12 string using only a metal slide. While much of disc one sounds exactly like what it is, a worthwhile experiment, disc two is considerably more explosive, as he weaves his newly discovered modes and styles into a convincing and highly personal vocabulary.

RICHARD H KIRK
EARLIER/LATER
MUTE 10K96 3CD
SANDOZ
DIGITAL LIFEFORMS REDUX
MUTE 10K97 3CD
BY NITH MOUNE

Robert Watson's early experiments with electronics, tape cut-ups and extreme FX processing produced some of the most vibrant music of the post-punk age. Less rigorously ideologically than contemporaries like Throbbing Gristle, CV focused more strongly on the texture of the music than high art concepts and shock tactics. Although the contributions of fellow members Stephan Mallader and Chris Watson were crucial, Kirk was the chief architect of their distinctive sound.

The earlier portion of the collection of "unfinished projects" gathers together some of his attempts to create blends for both the contemporaneous work of CV and his own solo releases. Indeed, somewhat cheekily, much of the collection comprises the abandoned backdrops to tracks that appeared on his *Time High Fiction* album. The rest consists of

experiments with primitive electronics, the results of which fed into the earliest CV work. It's as mean and raw as the pose the teenage Kink studies on the CD cover.

In the silences after he muses on the possibility that he should be producing music like this today in the light of both the far weaker Later CD and the expanded reissue of the 1968 work as *Sandwich*, one might well be forced to agree. Kirk's early music always seemed to be the anarchic, as if he was attempting to transform his spindly energy and skittering rhythm bones into something awesome and monstrous, and in this he did as well as could be expected with an array of cheap flangers and reverb units. But the power and charm of albums like CV's *Mix-Up* and his own *Disposable Half Truths* lie in their glorious failure to transcend their technological limitations. The agitated sound Kirk forged in the group's Western World studio — muddy, bloated, unbridling in its density — is the sound of pushing given resources to the limit. Come the mid-80s and the arrival of affordable digital technology, Kirk finally had access to the equipment that would enable him to make the music he was hearing in his head. It turned out not to be what listening to *The Later* disc sounds like little more than a bombastic display of his new hi-fi bells and whistles.

The arrival of home and Toshio in Sheffield clubs at the end of the 80s inspired Kirk to streamline his sound and produce some great work under the *Ken and Sewer* band name. By the time of the original 94 releases of *Digital Lifetimes* (released here with an additional 78 minutes of mixes and unreleased tracks), he was firmly established in the intelligent techno community as a purveyor of smooth, efficient dance music. The album is sporadically inventive in its subtle deployment of global influences, but utterly lacks the freshness, surprise and edge of his earliest work.

KLAUS LANG SEJAKU FUR STREICHQUARTETT EWMARKS RZ R2491 CD BY BRIAN MCINTOSH

There are strings here, but, my Lord, they play false. Klaus Lang's composition for string quartet, played here by The Arditi Quartet, is the quietest thing I've heard since Luigi Nono's magnificently evanescent *Fragmente An Stille*. Diatonic, of which the original LP release probably yielded more blues, ties and surface noise than played sounds. Here, the techniques employed are even more involved and apart from odd pizzicato accents and the glissando rattle of Roman De Senne's cello, it's very difficult to find for much of the duration of *Sejaku* what is being played and how.

Certainly some passages sound as if they played below the bridge or even on the body of the violin or cello, while other places suggest radical detuning and possibly bowing with the wood rather than the hairs. All this is sumless, and largely irrelevant, for *Sejaku* is an endurable musical poem of involving complexity and an equal but opposite simplicity of melody that is almost unheard, rather like encountering a word in an unknown language and accept.

This is essentially Lang's starting point, to find

the aural equivalent of Japanese ideograms that stand for the words "tarnished" and "star". The composer is at pains to point out that "tarnished" is only an approximation, but it points to a concept that is central to Japanese aesthetics, *tsurushi* or oxidation form part of it, but so, too, do natural decay, refraction, distance from original intent, accidental characteristics and a host of related ideas. Tarnished musically, this yields a soundworld in which nothing is as it ought to be — no hierarchy of instruments or of strings, no obvious tonal centre (though *Sejaku* is drenched in a C minor feel), no obvious trajectory or drama. Lang includes two short texts, one about the untouchable beauty of the stars, the other about the seemingly infinite ways of slicing fish for sashimi, with row tone as primary material, its flavour subtly affected by thickness and angle of cut and overt by the pressure and speed of the slice. It's easier to see how this might translate into a musical language for string players, who are aware that the slightest change in pressure, angle or bow position yields new reflections of sound.

Sejaku owes quite a bit of authority and troubled calm. Play very quietly indeed.

ROBERT MARCEL LEPAGE LA MACHINE À EXPLORER LE TEMPO ANNECTWORKS MAGNETOMES AM 16 CD BY BRIAN MCINTOSH

French-Canadian composer Robert Marcel Lepage has written for a wide range of media, including soundtracks to almost 100 films, documentaries and games. He's also recorded as an improviser. On *La Machine À Explorer Le Temps* he wears his composer's hat, and at a jaunty angle, the title alludes both to HG Wells's novel *The Time Machine* and *La Nef*, the Montreal-based Early Music group for whom this playful suite was commissioned. *La Machine* is presented in three free-wheeling movements (or "paradoxes"), as Lepage has it, "The Time That Passed," "The Time That Hurts By" and "Distorted Time," each of which consists of diverse musical styles, genres based on improvisation and sampling and live sound processing.

This sounds suspiciously like a high art concept, but the music is firmly rooted in the vernacular. Waltzes, jazz and Country music are mixed with bangs and breezy Hawaiian guitar, though Lepage avoids the quick change ploys of Naked City or the scam that Frank Zappa's Mothers Of Invention played on pastiche. The instrumentation, which consists of the Turkish cello, bass viola da gamba, cello and guitar, electric and acoustic, double bass, guitar, saxophones, flugelhorn, violin, trombone and percussion, is used sparingly and artfully. Each of the movements' subsections has been given a distinctive weight and colour. Lepage has been extremely well served in this regard by his musical arranger Louis Babin. *La Nef*, bolstered by one or two guests, dig into this rambling-but music with unrestrained glee — there's none of the stiffness and preciousness that academy musicians often bring to their playing of vernacular music. As a concert entertainment, which is no more than it purports to be, *La Machine À Explorer Le Temps* is extremely successful, and its qualities have translated well to CD.

MATMOS MET LIFE 6: RAT RELOCATION PROGRAM LOOMST L54 CD BY JOHN MULLERY

On 2001's playful *grrm A Chance Is Cut Is A Chance To Cure*, Matmos performed "Far Fela", an elegy for their dead pet rat constructed out of plucking and howling to empty cages. There's a serious conspiracy there, as Marnie Schmidt and Drew Daniel's rat-centric entry in the *Met Life* series, an irregular programme of releases designed as responses to urban environments, ideally built around field recordings.

It's a dream commission for such relentless and mischievous sound sources as Matmos who, along with the likes of Matthew Herbert, have imbued their music with subtext by methodically revealing the origins of their samples. *Rat Relocation Program* makes this process more explicit than ever. "Look one, 'Rat'", as an uncredited recording by Daniel of what they term a "street rat", a disruptive presence in their San Francisco apartment. Lured into a humane trap, the track consists of 14 minutes of its frantic nuzzling, enlivened by staggeringly awful screams. As a way of proving Matmos's professional versatility and the excellence of their recording techniques, I guess it's valuable. But notwithstanding the merciful way the rat was treated — and released into a "wealthy suburban neighbourhood" the next day — It remains an uncomfortably lively piece of sound art.

"*Rat Relocation*" becomes an angry soundtrack by incorporating the rattle and squeak into a more typical Matmos piece. The sounds are manipulated — Schmidt's latest instruments include a rat distance pedal. But the real-time sequence of screams remains intact. The first terrible noise, at 45 seconds, is now the climax of a marking electronic build. Rather than a howling 14 minute piece, "*Rat Relocation*" scuffles between clusters of sound and ideas with a parody realness that echoes the animal's agitation. There are passages of hummingbird drift by leaves, distant isolationism and the sort of catfishy glitch most often associated with Matmos, in which the screams become a form of masochistic punishment. After five minutes or so, they lock into a semi-verse burst of disco material, only for the rats delirious screams to bring the passage to an abrupt, inevitable conclusion. One to admire — if only enjoy — and useful, too, for testing the auditory responses of your cats.

KAFFE MATTHEWS/MANDY MCINTOSH/ZEEMA PARKINS WEIGHTLESS ANIMALS ANNETWORKS AMPWCD 1P BY JULIAN COWLEY

"What would be your soundtrack for space?" Responses elicited by that question, posed to astronauts, NASA mission controllers and residents of Houston, Texas, provided a data base for the music on this 12" picture disc which, together with a dedicated Website, constitutes the project *Weightless Animals*. Sound artist Kaffe Matthews and multi-instrumentalist Zeema Parks share the compositional credits. Mandy McIntosh has supplied the visual compositions, including a cartoon inspired on the vinyl that depicts all three escaping gawily in their capsule.

observe!
(no, not over there)



the haffler trio scissors cut arrow

1 to receive to write you, and stay there
silence closed evening, and no words
reaching, because all, it went with you...

2 a audio waveform
with 3.1 surround
sound (the haffler trio)
cosmic photographic space
total time of great work
14.24 it can be open
and someone else as well



the haffler trio making the haffler trio

having colours, different visual analysis,
something like the same, how to be correct
could be the 'haffler' could be the 'haffler'...

a 12" vinyl thing, all day is very self,
save for the harsh light of reality
all, and finally, finally, finally,
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By The Ponys



Chicago's **The Ponys** have a blasted single out that may not be exactly brand new, but I just heard it, so what the hell? *Psychic Head/Now Does It Best?* (In The Red PRODUCTIONS) is a very leftfield type of garage gush, combining a rather strange kind of organ attack with heavily machined guitar sections and a moaning feel that reminds me of a Velvet bootleg I heard once, that consisted of six different takes of "I Can't Stand It" recorded with microphones hidden inside of six different kittens. Sounds like what The Cumps might have been like if they'd been raised in a roller rink. But not really.

The Demers were an improvising hardcore punk outfit from Fort. Finland (same hometown as Ozzy), who existed between 1994-97. Apparently they recorded over 450 songs during their life cycle, and a dozen of the best are on *The Demers* (Lal Lal Lo 15 7"). The tunes are built around primitive guitar riffs, halting rhythm box action, and vocals that sound like they were recorded in a sandbox. What results is something very much like a good (even great) version of those kiddie punk groups from California that always looked so promising on paper, but sounded so horrible on the turntable. This stuff is obviously being created at about ten times the speed of thought, and the wildness with which it flies from my speakers is in testament to the sheer recklessness of youth.

The delightfully scary *Od Ordeal* (the true band of East Sussex) has arrived again with another plunderphonic blast, *Song 4 U/Precedence* (Sportsman Stargazer SPART005 7"). Combining very lyrical hints of her earlier from various lounge globes, stitching them together like so many shaggy Hallows' lanterns, ignoring the skippy production turns of Oswald et al for a slow, sleazy one that recalls the trajectory of a Vegas underdog blowjob queen, *Od Ordeal* creates moods more so subversively uncomfortable than one can easily describe. He treats everything as though it's just another pig roast at Martin Desha's house, but it sure feels like Pompeii to me.

The first volume in Important Records' *Art's & Crafts Series* is a gorgeous package by **Jed Fair Bang** of *The Whisks/The Box Recorder* (Dough/Nine A Nine Day Important 020 7"). Fourteen songs onto a clear disc is a clear choice, which is packaged up with some hand-drawn paper art by Jed. The songs are

wonderful, almost Residential in manner, combining minimal electronics with hoisted vocals, sound effects, and bubbles of gush. In the last few years, Jed's solo stuff has really taken on a wild hermiticist attitude like his work with Half Japanese (or anything else you could easily name). That said, this 7" would be a great place to check him out again, if it had been a while. Would be a fine and early starting point as well. It's a keeper on all known levels.

First of two grandest split singles of the issue is by **Feeth** and **Puante**. It contains a superb little cut record with a comic book, which is filled with the kind of ingenious visuals that all else burns low. Feeth is a new one to me but there's nothing displeasing about the way these (presumed) New Zealanders take the rocky dynamics of infrastructure and wave it around their heads like so much flaming wood. Rock? Yeah, sure. But what kind? I dare you to name it! *Ha*. *Puante* is a well known entity. Their contribution to *New Comic Art & Split Record* (Hot Art 2/2 7") is one of Stefan Neville's wonderful mock-swing. On his back he lets everything go so slack that it runs through your head like a river of melting wax, all sweetly trifling as it stazes between your ears.

Some part of Dreams Of Tall Buildings (U/Wagon and maybe someone else) also records as **Geography Of Nowhere**. Thus far I've heard these releases (Experimental Seabird SEA-BAS 08/10/11 3ACD-R), and each collects several very nice, diffuse, stashed through various sonic wildernesses. Less musical, per se, than even the most obtuse DOB material, the tracks here have been described as field recordings, and that tag has a certain ring of truth to it (although the field in which these recordings take place is not always devoid of musical instruments). The ways these instruments are handled, however, have a nice "you mean man" quality to them. Things are touched as if for the first time. Connections are made that are only partially understood. A lattice of harness is raised and then lowered. By strategy. The first of the trio of discs, the Geo-Thermic Properties Of Handley feels like finding thermal steam trains at an amusement park. The second, *Research For Advancement Of Memory* is one of those that reveals the lovely sonic reaches of known glitch behavior (unless my dream is fucking up). The third, *Geography Of Nowhere*, is the most intimately wonk. They're all

cool, though, and the first one comes with a chain that will allow you to wear it around your neck like a pendant. How many other releases will make that claim this year? Not too damn many.

From San Francisco, **The Huskies** are a female trio of sufficient crudity to be of interest to almost anyone. Their approach is so basic as to be almost idiotic but the combination of raunch guitar, Badley Field drum throb and gal snort vocalism achieves a very lovely balance. Their first single, *Gave/No Don't Hate* (Blue Bus BB002 7") is a Gorney/Denham Don't Rode style leap into the wet mouth of proto-rock feminism, and it is a rather wonderfully chaotic thing.

Taking their name from a great Stanley Kubrick film, **Killer's Wax** are a loud garage quartet also hailing from San Francisco. Their debut single, *Gotta Getta Love/Backsides* (Blue Bus BB003 7") is a basic, timeless gunt pack of tunes, recalling "Kill City"-era Stooges, all those extremely crumbly grunts of the early 90s Austin punk scene, and every drunk you ever saw swaying in a club at 3am with pants as sinking as they were wet. Indeed, I might go so far as to suggest that I had saved myself to the sound of these teens, but that would be a goddamn lie. Still, given the right set of circumstances, who is to say that this will always be true?

Second of two top-splashing split singles of this particular issue is that shared by **Manuals/Jugoslav 1960** and **Maniac's Dream**, *Kraku Mig, Jug Jug Jug/Megacore* (Lal Lal Lo 9 7"). M-60's pieces are strange, rokkie assemblages of noise, sound and near-form. Using instruments most often found in the foggy woods (plus ether short organ or accordion), they keep and release like dogs fighting to see which of them gets to lick the blood off of Jesus's feet. *Maniac's Dream* are related (somewhat) to Firkin's better known *Avaria*, and their side is probably a bit more easily identifiable as "noise cut music" to even the uninitiated. Maybe. Breathing with all their holes open, *Maniac's Dream* make each of their event moments sound something like the middle of one of the San City Girls' most wondrous noise jams: which is pretty hot, no matter how true you slice it.

Another neat slice of noise-ho comes from a New York trio called **Psychic Like**. Their first single is *After/Now* (Mental Movement MV001 7") and has a really majestic mixture of Crustfield-like Goth elegance and more standard apocalyptic

rampage. The drum machine is set on the steepest beat available (which is a blue plus), the bass hums like a very horny whale, the guitar and organ peak very specific notes and hold onto 'em for dear life, and the vocals hang like dark curtains of pus somewhere in the distance. It's a fine sound, a young sound, a sound you should get to know today.

Not sure what to tell you about **Scay Prison**, except that they have a one sided record out, *Bury My Heart At Wadsworth/Escape From Dusty Mountain* (Dimitrus 040 7") that is rather inspiring. They're from Sacramento and they create a very discordant electro-punk attack that has all kinds of annoying disco highlights, crossed with vocals by guys who sound like they spend a lot of time strutting the holes in white balls. Still, just whenever you think that things are going to become too obnoxious to bear, an explosion comes ripping down the street that has enough power to tear your clothes off and feed your lips into a big punk buzzsaw. It's a pretty bodacious process. (BC)

Francisco Lopez (Untitled 119 (Lapilli LAPI 3 33)) is the first such release on Lapilli, a London based label at which upcoming releases are expected from Richard Chaffler and Steve Roden. With *Untitled 119*, Lapilli has got off to a flying start. Lopez's music for electronics falls into two broad categories: compositions so whisper-quiet they seem like ghosts of themselves, or beautifully intense noise. *Untitled 119* is of the latter persuasion. For the first minute or so of this 17 minute composition, the music rises towards the threshold of audibility, then it digs progressively louder until, at 1:29", it ends abruptly. But that's only part of the story. The architecture of Lopez's compositions is often extremely simple — in the case of *Untitled 119* it's nothing more than a cymbal. But the compositions are in the material, and the form that arises from the material. Essentially, *Untitled 119* is a hellish industrial roar, saturated in overtones, that conceals within it shivering elements that change in character as the volume increases: there are rations of "pure" sounds within the noise — deep bells, throbbing organ tones, two-interval melodies — that never quite reveal themselves, perhaps aren't actually there at all. The effect is disquieting, yet curiously appealing. (BM) □ Reviewed by Ryan Coley and Brian Marley

The new "impassioned sonic cartoons" on the LP were assembled from samples and improvisations. Murrow's subtle and advanced electronic know-how and Perkins's ingeniously unorthodox harp techniques effectively evoke a boundless environment, underscored with lines of ascent and falling. But there's much more to *Weightless Animals* than ethereal soundscaping. Offering through their ether are fragments of musical debris, *Harpist* beats, pedal steel melancholy, a trace of wistful piano melody loaded to infinity a veiled dispersed shower of heavy metal. Voices of astronauts broadcast from space are reinterpreted and recycled along with suggestions of sounds they may have heard beyond earth's atmosphere and of the music from home they aspire to cross with theirs.

Whether or not you share the trio's taste for the 'glamour' of attempts to navigate outer space, their project provides a neat vehicle to extend their habitual practice as improvisors, negotiating with the already encoded given while investigating the lawless unknown.

NORBERT MÖSLANG
LAT NC

FOR 4 EARS 1549 GO
BY DAN WARBURTON

After 30 years' working together, including 16 as Vice Crack, Swiss musicians Norbert Mieslang and Andy Gahl have finally gone their separate ways. Mieslang's last solo project, recorded back in 2002 but only recently mixed and mastered, continues VC's noble tradition of using "cracked everyday electronics", various electrical gadgets and appliances to numerous to inventise and usually impossible to recognise by simply listening. To create a fantastic variety of soft-beeps, buzzes, drones and rumbles to be processed and spun into dense webs of sound. Vice Crack's instrumentation and working method were original and influential, representing a way forward for European improvised music that struck off in another direction from Improv's free jazz roots – improved music for industrial people, as it were.

Epithets such as austere and chilly, all too readily bandied about to describe music on programs such as Enzshelme, certainly do not apply here. Mölting's music is as hot, rough and alive as it always has been, a seething swirl of gliss, grit, gam and gurg, soaking out in all directions with discreet pulsing ostinato and illuminated by gamal, wild twitting sonos propis. Its very much a studio-produced project — one senses a huge amount of time and thought went into building its structures. Swiss architects are often all too notorious for their attention to detail, and *lat_ice* is a veritable *Le Corbusier* of an album, a huge, imposing post-neoclassical space reconfigured into a vibrant artistic experience on the micro as well as macro level. It deserves to be just as popular.

PAUL PANHUYSEN
A MAGIC SQUARE OF 5 TO
LOOK AT A MAGIC SQUARE OF
5 TO LISTEN TO

BY JULIAN COWLEY

For many years curator of Eindhoven's exemplary sound art venue Het Apollohuis, Paul Pontheyson trained as a visual artist during the 1950s. In 1968, inspired by Fluxus activities, he formed

the experimental music group The Macinnes Ensemble. His multifarious activities since then have often resembled a kind of dada structuralism: reason at work in the absence of a master plan, delimitations of pattern in fields of random occurrence. He has found music in such varied sources as long string vibrations, the collective warbling of canaries, the noise of dot matrix computer printers and agitated Neocan associated buyers.

His latest CD documents the audio transcription of a magic square of five, made for an installation that also presented the visual transcription — a floor design — which can be sampled on the cover art. A magic square is an arrangement of numbers within a square grid where the sum of integers in any row, including diagonals, gives the same total. From the orderliness of such Pythagorean numerical regularity Pashayan has generated an attractive mass of swooping tones, overlapped and interlocking to create a sense of almost ornate pulsation across the space of 29 minutes and 45 seconds. The sixth century philosopher Plato has suggested that the number made audible Pashayan presents to us as an unusually pure embodiment of that idea. His explanatory notes may have a forensic quality, but the sounds he has used are eminently right.

EDDIE PRÉVOST TRIO
THE BLACKBIRD'S WHISTLE

EVAN PARKER &

**EVAN FARKER &
EDDIE PREVOST**
IMPONDERABLE EVIDENCE

JOHN TILBURY &

**JOHN HEDBURY &
EDDIE PRÉVOST**
DISCRETE MOMENTS

MATCHLESS MISS CO
BY BRIAN MARLEY

Recorded at Gateway Studios between October 2003 and January 2004, these three CDs provide good insight into Eddie Prévost's current working methods and musical concerns. On the eerie, *The Blackbird's Whistle*, his long-forgotten jazz know-how more fully informs his taste (artistry than previously, especially when Tom Chant plays tenor saxophone). Chant is known as a soprano saxophonist, and on that instrument he has a strong individual voice. Although his playing is made less impactful by his resourceful and inventive On the opener, "Twirls Of Modulation", and the title track, he and Prévost engage in such muscular, tightly woven interplay that John Edwards's double bass struggles to gain purchase in the music (Edwards, Edwards proves his worth by throwing out handfuls of imaginative cues that Chant, in particular, responds to extremely well. On slower, moodier, rather indirect pieces like "A Conversation Without Indirectness", in which Chant plays a more low-key tenor sax as a tenor, bass clarinet, the three-way exchange is heard to best advantage.

Farmer and Privost's 1997 recording, *Most Material*, a highlight of the Matchless catalogue, contained one CD that bowed close to the free jazz from which both players drew sustenance early in their careers, and one that was more in the free improv vein for which they are better known. On the leisurely follow-up, *Imponderable Evidence*, recorded in November 2003, an

almost free jazz feel predominates, with Parker sticking to tenor saxophone throughout. Perhaps it's something to do with the recording, which is less presentational than it ought to be, but *Imponderable Evidence* looks some of the zest, drama and contrast of *Most Memorable*. That said, the longest track, "Exhibit C," bums daffily, and on "Exhibit B" Parker, one of the great saxophonists of all time, makes every phrase an elaborate and beautiful one of its own.

As heralds of AMM, such tracks have been written about by John Young and Eddie Prevost, but very little of that writing can be applied successfully to *Disorderly Memory*. For one thing, it was to be said, hardly at all like AMM it does sound rather more modern, however. Of all the percussion that Prevost plays on this recording, his straggled barrel has the greatest impact. On "D," its ambiguously pitched base plunkings contrast superbly with Tibbys's delicate, gamelan-like prepared piano. The duo make an unhurried, carefully considered music that has no clear trajectory and is full of purposeful lingerings and serene sapience. Tibbys's sparkling use of organ in one of those surges. His sustained clusters on the lengthy "T," to which dissonances are slowly added and subtracted, mirrors the harmonic eddiness of Prevost's great work.

Much of the activity here and elsewhere on *Discrete Moments* is low key, with instruments slipping in and out of the music almost unobserved. This is one of the most satisfying recordings Privot has made away from AMM, and it's an ideal companion piece to *Dogs For Doves*. Keith Rowe and Tibbony's stunning 2003 set for Estrus will

THE RESIDENTS
THE KING AND EYE RMX

WB-RMY

BY KEN HOLLINGS

¹⁰The 19th century dislike of Romantic

gliss." observed Oscar Wilde, but it's nothing compared with the fury felt by the Residents towards the renascence of their own age. After all, those big geballs, behind which they have sought to hide their identities over the past 20 years or so, must be on the lookout for something. But the sad truth remains that the Residents, having examined the superficial expressions of emotion in American popular culture, saw that it was ugly and false and then vented their spleen upon it. Their dismemberment of musical forms is nothing compared with the manner in which they have mutilated human feeling at the belief that they

The *King And Eye* is a case in point. Bearing an album around Elvis impersonators in 1999 was way too easy a shot. Elvis knew how to fake it for real. That's why he was so great. Even though the German producer Pascher has been given free rein to produce the original 24 track masters as he thinks fit, his elegant Techno spin can't quite hide the dark theatre of disappointment that *The Residents*, in their sulky adolescent fury, have made of the King's original hits.

By comparison, The Residents' own remixes, on WB-RMX, of their previously unreleased Warner Bros album (a selection of demos sent anonymously to WB exec Harve Heinstein and

returned to "The Residents, 20 Sparrow St. San Francisco") have a starchy neatness to them. Lopped and looped together, they passage the early greatness of "The Infant Tango" and "Six Things To A Cycle" and the magnificent Eskimo. The cover art for this release also features four strapping young men apparently trying to give each other enemies. Looks like they may finally be getting to the heart of things.

JANEK SCHAEFER
COLD STORAGE

OSP DPROCES CO
BY DAN WARSBURTON

Janek Schneider might be best known for his technical innovations, notably the In-Phonic three-arm turntable and the daring customised pressing of last year's experimental vinyl *Skate*, which recently netted him first second prize in the Pro Audio Electronics. But live improvisations and installations are also a major element of his work. Like 2002's *Black Immune* on Sirr, *Cold Storage* started out as a site-specific project when Schneider was invited to perform in Rome in a back vaulted cellar previously used as a cold storage room.

He went about collecting *mindscapes* recordings related to 'cold' and 'storage' and incorporated them into a live performance using effects pedals and a mixing desk. In preparing this deliberate *concept*, Schaefer deliberately avoided excessive mixing and post-productions, providing the piece direct to disc and editing as quickly and simply as possible, to preserve the sweep and spontaneity of the live experience. Indeed, unlike other notable sonic excursions into cold and storage – one thinks of the glacial atmospheres of Thomas Köner's *Ammonium* or the gloomy desaturation of the recent recordings with *Arctivore* issued as a bank vault. Schaefer's work is decidedly downbeat, collecting all manner of reverberant trucks and industrial machine logs into the kind of colourful machine concrete associated with his French near-nomadic phase (samples of whose work featured extensively on *Slates*).

If Pierre Schoffer's observation, "a composed structure (such as we perceive it) cannot be deduced from separate perceptions of its component objects" comes to mind – it is quoted and referenced in Janek Schoffer's essay/*manifesto* "Audio & Image" (available on his Website) – so does the work of another Schoffer, R. Murray whose concepts of keynote sounds, signals and soundmarks are of central importance to the British composer's work. Caki Strazi is an expressive resource not only of Schoffer's own career as a sound artist, but of half a century of theory and practice of electronic music in all its diverse forms.

SIEG ÜBER DIE SONNE

+1
MULTICOLOR MORIBAL CD

BY NICK SOUTHGATE

"The future is boring" goes the laconic and cynical mantra drolled out from +2 opener "Mason", dragging on one of a long evening's innumerable agencies and dropping its ash on the carpet with icy disdain. It is, of necessity and inevitably, the perfect entrance, for +1 is a cocooned and delicious absurdity – pop music for an elite.

Central collaborators Pink Elin and Daisy Jack, equally celebrated for their work with Atom Heart, construct the Techno deconstructions in

The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

Harp throbs: Dorothy Ashby

Founded in 1950 by two Polish immigrant brothers, Leonard and Phil Chess (formerly Cez), Chess Records sent the remainder of that decade building up a roster and a legacy that is one of the cornerstones of rock, soul and R&B. That it was founded in Chicago was no coincidence—in the 1940s, that city had the fastest growing black population in the USA, taking in a mass migration of African-Americans anxious to get the hell out of the deep South but bringing all kinds of baggage with them to the big city. Hence, the city played host to the sort of fertile clash from which great cultures are made, in this case North/South, urban/rural. In the 50s, the likes of Muddy Waters, Chuck Berry, Howlin' Wolf and so on didn't record for the label. By the 60s, however, the crowds showcased on **Chicago Soul Electric Blues, Funk & Soul** (Soul Jazz SS93) CD), the means they helped found had migrated south. Chess artists had to cope in a new world determined by The Beatles, Motown and psychedelia, and there's an awkward feeling on a few tracks here of old-school blues being left behind. So, when The Soul Stirrums sing "Why Am I Treated So Bad?"—gospel and blues put through a contemporary 60s prism—it's as if they're becoming the sonic penitentiaries of the new era, being forced to endure 'colourlessness'.

But, most make an excellent list of it, Howlin' Wolf's "Earl," recorded in 1965, takes advantage of the blackback from blues-battered Hendrix, soaked in seamy and wail—the vocally planned "Baldhead" from by Little Alexander is great Technicolor soul, while sometime Art Ensemble Of Chicago guest vocalist Fonnella Bass (is there any greater name than that in all of contemporary music?) shows her off-the-scale range on the soul-lit "Leave It In The Hands Of Lord". Also included are selections from arranger Richard Evans, whose crackling, unvarnished but sophisticated use of funky orchestration is in effect on The Soulful Strings' "Burning Spear" and most autumn on Dorothy Ashby's "Soul Vibrations", with Ashby's harp whirling dephatically above Evans's busy ensemble. These particular tracks did resist all attempts at coersion into lifestyle or loungey nostalgia. (DS)

Electronic musician Bernd Friedmann believes that "generating sound is sexual practice," and his latest is a gush of Cologne-ic impingement called **Difficult Easy Listening** (Nonplace NMD14 CD). The disappointment of 2002's *Nu Du* (Flynn CD, Carl Cox), is averted with this collection of irreproducible, classless, complex human-interface electronics. Striding on a vocase in Australia a few years ago, Friedmann

and friend Alan Heart hatched a plan for their duo Flanger, recorded in Chile and posited on the notion of creating a 'jazz' record, complicated and spontaneous sounding as a Weather Report LP that would be totally programmed, where no sound was unplanned. Friedmann enjoys lying with confusions of genre and artificiality, but is now deconstructing a lush A&R talent too, as his *Nonplace* sonata grows girly around him. Newcomers include Shank and Swast, both of whom turn in undulating, deep Fourth World skanks. Friedmann's own group with Can drummer Jaki Liebeck is resampled twice here, once a hidden track repeated in, all all places, Avarade, Paraguay on tour in late 2003. The Can rhythmist is the perfect foil for Friedmann's lucky sense of pulse, and often it feels like two or three different grooves are being played out all at the same time—you ears are forced to play Frögger, hopping between these contrasting elements. Elsewhere the music largely makes play with notions of authenticity and reality, governed by Friedmann's insistence on a broad privilege of duty, to which he assigns the wide definition of improvisation with the studio and the mixing desk, effects, etc. So the two tracks by Alan Heart's Repeat Rhumba Rockers are solo cut "I guess jobs that sound very low, fluid and then titled 'Life Is Full Of Cables'." The contributions from Bege go out the low and with staggering funk. Benji's solo "Bless" is African funk in handy rondo form, and the two Nu Du Players contribute to a genuine Friedmann big band—pleasantly teased with plenty of instrumental feedback. As Friedmann's alter ego "Bernie The Boss" himself waxes of acoustic instruments, rubbing is most exciting than pushing. (RT)

Drive right past the generic sense tiding to read **Rage Sessions** (Sessions SEHD18 2002) from Firebox in Jamaica and fashion in London, two foundation labels of modern reggae. Police come from Ian McKaye, guaranteeing quality. This one really alongside the Pressure Sounds overview of King Tubey's digital talent from a couple of years ago, the Firebox tribute being especially evocative. The tempo rhythm dominates the JA half with cuts from Redrose's original King Edward, the mutated strain of "Chank Angles Pt 2" by King Asha, plus King Kong's strictly anthropological "Aids". Other killers include Little John stoking a claim on Junior Byrds' "Tide Away" and the return of King Edward, murdering Bacharach & David on the sound system genre "Kil De Pin". Realize weight in again at the close on the "Joe Project" rhythm with a tribute to King Tubey on "Dubs Organiser". The UK and at Fashion's A-Class

studio holds up well against such tough opposition. (SR)

Reissued on Evan Parker's label is a radically augmented status of what happened when ten leading improvisers convened in July 24 years ago for a summer version of Company week. **Piss 1989 Improvisers Supersession** (Pis 04 CD/24 2002) was originally issued on LP with less than an hour of music. It now runs at 142 minutes and grows immensurably from the extra material, which lends a consistency of purpose to the whole. Indeed, the most intriguing material is previously unissued, like a half-hour trio featuring trombonist George Lewis, bassist Merten Altena and percussionist Paul Lovens. Parker and co-producer Martin Davidson have also restored to full length Derek Bailey's duo with Altena and a wonderful quartet with bassist Barry Guy, Lewis, fellow-percussionist Paul Lytton, Parker and violinist Philipp Wachsmann. Lewis reappears in a magnificent three trombone frontline (Paul Rutherford and Gasca Carlo Schiaffini are the others) in a group composed by Altena and Guy. This is consistently fascinating music. (BM)

Berlin Grooves (Abram 03 3rd CD-R) is the third in Abram's elegant limited edition Berlin series. This edition brings together Burkhard Beins, Tony Black, Steve Heather and Eric Schofer—all percussionists active on the city's improvised music scene. As with previous releases (Berlin Grooves and Berlin Strings), each musician is given a 21 minute free CD-R, and the overall length is about that of a conventional CD, but the spirit is more self-willed to single instrument improvisation, as the spontaneity of the various statements is preserved. Burkhard Beins is known for his work with Portico and Anglo-German trio The Sealed Knot. One of the strengths of Beins's playing is his ear for the strange. His piece begins with several minutes of dense rhythmic work and moves suddenly into a high pitched drum. There he explores nothing, noises that could come from a field recording of ancient agricultural machinery. The track slides off down the plughole with a liquid gurgling accompanied by bells.

Tony Black, another resourceful improviser, is familiar to many as the sinuous percussive presence in Australian trio The Necks. His playing on Berlin Grooves is restless and ever alert. Nothing is allowed to settle into place for long. Intricate sequences of percussive incidents are combined with textural explorations. For one intense and totally rich stretch, Black plays resonant tones around symbols—his sounds resonating around an understated pulse. After 21 minutes, the listener has travelled a long way along both rhythmic and tonal axes.

Disc three is given to another Australian, Steve Heather, who uses percussion, some of it programmed, alongside abrasive analogic scatches and squeaks. The vibe is immediately very different to that on either Beins's or Black's contributions. The piece is strange in the context, bringing a dose of minimal repetitive beat play, recalling Thomas Brinkmann or Richie Hawtin, into the improvisational orbit. This is a surprising inclusion but one that points to the fertility of the Berlin scene. Eric Schofer plays zither and percussion, squeezing six short pieces into his disc. His playing is wide open, swirling and discarding forms easily and including bell work, bowed scopes and delicate bell play. As with the other three performances, percussion doesn't begin to describe the expansiveness of the music. (WM)

Japanese group Pascals come together to pay homage to Pascal Comelade, the Catalan artist who has spent the last 30 years restoring the street vitality of broad swathes of cracked rock, film and Mediterranean music with an armory of toy and junkbox instruments. Transcending the novelty factor of, say, reducing Deep Purple's "Smoke On The Water" to a 25 second rendition of its core riff on a baby piano, Comelade's work is by turns radical of Nino Rota, Jacques Ibel, soundtracks, Brel, Kraftwerk, and any number of southern European song traditions little heard in Anglo-American dominated pop media. In a similar spirit Pascals very quickly overcome the sheer weakness of a tribute group covering their godfather's idiosyncratic choices, among other pieces, to make music with equivalent can-do guile. Drawn from the parent projects of various Pascals, **Half Moon Of Pascals** (Les Oques Du Sol El De Amor DSAS4086 CD) gives us more to illuminating their different routes to and from Comelade.

Collab and musical saw maestro Hasechi Sakamoto is the compiler's star, breeding scolding, shodding lines through two solo tracks and the songs of Akane and Conansa. With chilling screams courtesy Sachio Sakamoto, the letter's "From A Winter Note" has the collection off of its predominantly jaunty and autumnal melancholy mindsets. Played on slide whistle, melotron, toy piano, guitar and footbells, Tama's "Gaudi San" is as close as it gets to Comelade parody but is none the worse for that. You also get the descriptively named Komatsu Keomoe and the class-drenched songs of Utano, before Hirochiro Sakamoto closes the set with a beguiling call for solo and musical saw. (BK)

Reviewed by Steve Barker, Bill Neill, Will Montgomery, Brian Mortas, David Stubbs and Rob Young



Sieg Über Die Sonne over which Dorian Jeggo Goretzky whimsically delivers his jaundiced wisdom and sentiments. Every track on their second album is a solid gold floor filler to which only the determinedly immobile or congenitally flunkwise would refuse to move. However, every effort is accented with cool intelligence, serving to remind diabolos and coprosants alike that the brain is a muscle worth exercising too.

His Euro-groove beats his control for the outside line of the axolotl on tracks like "Gothic," "Love Is OK" and the punningly tonal "Charlotte De Gaulle." Elsewhere the song structure is more dominant, as on "Cleaning Windows," flecked with funk-funk funk and modalities that would leave George Formby guffawing. Sieg Über Die Sonne came their immaculately poised place in the ranks of smart ecotopos with effortless aplomb. Innovation is not the aim here. They know the model, and know it's still looking good. But it would be waste in the extreme to voice this concern. This is not a time for doubt: It is a time to dance.

SLOWBLOW MOBILE MOUTH CD/EP

BY LOUISE GRAY

At a shade under 40 minutes, the lo-fi indie duo Slowblow's third album in ten years may seem a little brief, but it's certainly never slight. On the contrary—the odd combination of feebility and precision with which Ben Krasnow and Dagar Kirs Peterson construct their songs describes a kind of a light where each gesture aspires to the significance of simply being noticed. If their lyrical focus is on the minuscule, then the duo's materials match the mood perfectly. Upturned brine used as drums, crumpled glass and, far in the background of "Cardboard Box," the muted sound of distant crashing fireworks are all deployed in a lo-fi assemblage where even the featured vocals of (principally) Kristin Anna Valtysdóttir become a murmuring cove.

The sense of space pervading Slowblow was most intense in the quarters of their 1998 album, *Fouquet*, but now it's control, the action of the opening "Very Slow Bessano" is more in the songs' connective tissues—the flow of images, the hesitant piano—than the substance itself. Possibly this technique was developed in tandem with Jónsson and Peterson's visual projects—between them, they were responsible for directing and soundtracking *Nó Aldrei*, and they have created numerous other film and photographic works—and it serves them well. At times, the links are more explicit: "Hanging Cemetery" [sic] is a stage manual for a scene in a drama. Even the whistling of an old harmonium on "Phantom Of My Origin" betokens nostalgia.

It's hard not to suggest Slowblow's songs are in search of films to complete them. Their enormous strength lies in their evocative power of a quotidian ordinariness that we can all relate to.

SPACE MACHINE

3 RAMPANT RECORDS CD

BY STEPHEN ROBINSON

It is, oddly enough, the third album to bear the Space Machine moniker the self-titled "analogic electronic cosmic sound project" inaugurated in 2000 by Nanase Mase, aka Masasane. This is actually a CD reissue of the limited edition

double vinyl LP on the Belgian Illuac label, complete with a replica of the original's ghiblied sleeve sporting gyo graphics, a mountain, a retro synths and the man himself peering out from behind his aliases from the inner sanctum of his Space Machine Systems studio.

After taking time out—unsurprisingly due to ill health—from her ear-shredding microphone and body abuse, Masasane has taken some time and calm mind towards to contemplate the psychodelic potentialities of a vast and lightly expressive collection of vintage electronic instruments, including on this recording a Moog Solo Six, an EMS VCS3, an ARP Odyssey, a Roland System 100M, a PMA 4700, a Minimoix One Chamber 4R, a Maestro Echoplex EP3, a Moogfuzzor MF-104 analogic delay and a National cassette tape recorder.

Nanase's collector's reverence for this equipment extends equally to its deployment on record. Its sonic potentialities are approached respectably, almost as ends in themselves, and there's not a whiff of the flagrant disregard for other sound sources used or audience pain thresholds that characterizes his attitude as Masasane. While this makes a distinctive difference between the two projects, it's also their own severance towards the equipment, not to mention a rather hazy-headed notion of spousy psychodetics, that's ultimately the undoing of this recording. The instruments whoosh and thrub, pulse and modulate exactly as anyone who's had the most costly brute with the BCBs. Radioactive series for Doctor Who's "Space" — yet without the latter's sense of sonic adventure. The one difference is sheer desperation. But as yet more space sonic probes pulsate outwardly into the infinite recesses of a purely personal psychic space, its hard to lose the sense that the whole enterprise suffers from an overdose of cosmic blith. Only the subtle shifting (textile) landscapes provided by Acid Mothers Temple's Misato Kurokawa, which intertwine the whole with recording concluding the set, do anything to soften the apogees.

As for the electronics prodigy Kenji Kusanami, said. The future isn't what it used to be. Maybe the past isn't what it was either. Then in lies the difference between the visionary and the revisionist.

YUMIKO TANAKA

TAJIKU TAUTA

IMPORTED MUSIC FROM JAPAN MUSTO CD

BY CLIVE WELLS

For a Japanese woman, simply to play the gyo shamisen requires determination. The Benkai popper thesh, the instrument's nature, is a very much a male dominated endeavor. Yumiko Tanaka somehow comes down to work as a Japanese classical musician (under a different name) while also appearing in Otome's Grand Zen, John Zorn's *Cobra* and Butch Morris's *Conduction*. Anyone who saw her nearly stole the show in Henry Goretzky's stage musical *Hanging*, denoting and covering Beach Boys songs, will know her as a self-possessed performer operating entirely on her own terms. Tanaka recorded this, her first solo album, at home "in her four-and-a-half-foot-tall room" and much of it is very intimate. Ironically struck with a heavyweight platoon, the gyo shamisen projects to the back of a theatre. But here, sometimes using no platoon at all, Tanaka coaxes sounds with

fingerpots, bows the strings, or converts the shamisen into a buzzing percussive instrument for generating motoric rhythms. Her methods may be defiantly non-standard, but Tanaka uses no wild gestures. Rather this is patient and focused music making throughout. She acknowledges traditional Japanese culture more than most working in this area, referencing old ink paintings and Shinto rituals as inspiration. The first minute "Tayuta" is a beautiful melody wandering over a drone, eventually arriving home in a fragment of song. While in the slippery bedsidecap appogies of "Ruten" I can hear Okunawa folk, Buginese bangs and Fied Fild's solo guitar improv.

SIMEON TEN HOLT

HIGHLIGHTS

COMPOSER'S VOICE SPECIAL 1971-1980

BY PHILIP CLARK

Dutch minimalist composer Simeon Ten Holt turned 80 at the end of 2003 and the 11 CD set is issued in celebration of a composer the *slowdowns* describe as "the most recognizable in the Netherlands." Well, I've just looked Ten Holt up in Louis Andriessen's collected writings, *The Art Of Stalking Time*, but he doesn't warrant attention. I suspect Andriessen regards the classical elegance of his scores as apocryphally bourgeois, and Ten Holt's pieces are certainly at tangent to those politically combative scores by Andriessen and Cornelis de Bondt that have dominated some views of Dutch New Music.

The trajectory of Ten Holt's career—his rebellion against serial orthodoxy in the mid-1960s, his familiar sound and he describes his music as using traditional tonal harmony while "teasing the elements of tension and relaxation so characteristic of it," turning these into musical objects? His rejection of harmony as dialectic pits him against the post-serial language espoused by Frankfurt School philosopher Theodor Adorno that also forms a pillar of Andriessen's music, and obliges the listener to deal with familiar detail stripped of context or social purpose. Ten Holt's pieces have a tendency to length—of the eight pieces on this disc, the longest is *Stille* and *Stille* is over two hours long. *Stille* is an hour and a half and *Stille* is an hour and a half, but the works aren't about Feldman-like patterns that evolve gradually over long durations. In Ten Holt, a single chord is on the beat for ages, with sharply juxtaposed alterations of voicing, texture and rhythm, before the music suddenly leaps onwards to a new idea. Abrupt silences break the continuum, and simple figurations become grand schemes.

Unlike Feldman, *Stille* does not keep well in focus. It's a collection of pasticcios and of Benkai and Steinway are dropped in unapologetically, and I sometimes find *Stille* (his *Take Five*) wimp has been exploded from the shade and stretched over three hours. *Stille* is a work that breaks the predictability with dual tumbling chromatic inner voicings and, although Ten Holt's music is ultimately an indulgent and limited waste, it glimmers with musical objects that are resourceful and go to extremes to prove a point.

ALEXANDER TUCKER

U-SOUND VOL 18

U-SOUND ARCHIVE TO CD

BY TONY HARRINGTON

On a June recording "The Black Ban," in a voice not far removed from the downtown cadences that

seem to be the default vocal style for English outsider tongues all the way from Robert Wyatt to This Mortal Menace Tucker sings. "So my mother told me/She could speak in tongues/A small clearing opened up/To a makeshift shrine." Perhaps this epithet, real or imagined, was the trigger for the ten songs collected on this CD, which take the now mysterious story of English folk songs and interpret it through a post-industrial, minimalist, or folk if the music were recorded as a hint pitched on a ley line connecting Cecil Sharp House with the United States depot.

I met Alexander Tucker recently, in the company of Jackie-O Motherfucker's Tom Greenwood, who has issued this CD as part of his U-Sound Archive series, which has already shown up with the potent underground medicine of Wirehead Orchestra, Samoff! and Double Leopards. The conversation drifted around, touching on the question of why a group like Sam Off might appeal to your average teen Metal stoner (because they know there is so sound behind suggested Tucker), and the unique atmosphere at Durgin's on the South Kent coast where his parents have a house. With hindsight, it now that I've heard his music, the subjects were particularly germane, because Tucker turns an interest in the phenomenology of sound into a series of preternatural landscapes full of eerie resonances and spooned moans.

Tucker plays guitar, mandolin, electronics, minidisc. He doesn't Christian Fennell or Oren Andriessen, he doesn't use the electronics to process the guitar out of existence. Instead, on "Shorts Give Pleasure to Those Who Wear Them," "Pulse II Century" and "Kelpus," his approach is more like Terry Riley's use of delay lines, the patented Time Lag Accumulator, using the technology to abstract and multiply the single lines of acoustic instruments into laminated phase shift patterns. On "Lucite Blues" (sic) Tucker deploys heavily attenuated and reverbbed over chords to generate dense noise clouds. However, "Shardor" sounds more like a homage to once maligned strains of post-war English folk song, it might be a nod towards Ben Jandell, and John Newbourn, except for the thermal of electronic disturbance that flows at the far edges of the soundfield.

Amusing out of the blue, this is a great record, one that should be picked up forthwith by anyone left bewildered by the recent appointment of Alasdair Roberts as the poster boy of the New Word Alliance.

THE VANDERMARK FIVE

ELEMENTS OF STYLE...

AN UNUSUAL SURPRISE

ASTROPHIC ALPHO CD

ZU & SPACEWAYS INC

RADIALE

ADAPTIVE NO NUMBER CD

BY DAVID KIRKMAN

The Vandermark Five, still one of Chicago's key free-thinking musical associations, function primarily as asophonic. Ken Vandermark's main conceptual thinking, a place for him to pollinate ideas and to refine the increasing complexity of his writing in the company of a solid, albeit sometimes workmanlike, group of players. Years of his early solo work, in which the Empty Bottle have left the Five shaming an imaginative space perfectly left to Vandermark's favoured band of controlled

The Boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

All skin and bone: DNA's Arto Lindsay

"Don't be... DIRECT... but be... specific!" shrieks a very, bug-eyed Arto Lindsay, before mumbling something about ants, like he's terrified of what he's just said. Or perhaps he's terrified of the guitar he's manhandling in his hands like a fused bomb that's making uneasy hissing, sizzling noises. Drummer Isaac Moris's cymbals sound like a hybrid electric reactor. Robert Crayton's creaking keyboard line is ominous and gothic. "An art or a distance/Hot and unattuned," announces Lindsay, finally finding the words for what was making him see death 30 seconds earlier. But of course. An art, hot and unattuned. That was it all along. That's DNA logic.

The long-awaited DNA Go DNA (No More NO12 CD) finally collects the nine new recordings of shrank guitarist Lindsay and Moris's late 1970s New No Wave group. The set brings together DNA's side "I" single, their four contributions to the Brain Eep produced No New MP compilation, the A Taste of DNA EP featuring New York's Tim Wright on keys in place of Crayton, and several basking live recordings. With 32 songs totalling into 62 minutes and 47 seconds, every song necessarily jams. Each idea might be concocted into a short blast, but brevity doesn't make things any clearer — for DNA precision was yet another obscuring strategy. Their music is not poked down to its most bodily and horrifying essentials — a grotesque assemblage of muscle, skin, carnage and bone starrng you in the face. DNA music still stands as some of the most essential ever recorded. (CD)

The short career of **Bilf Fay** is an object lesson in the failure of a record industry to nurture one of its most promising young greenrocks. Typical of a generation who sought enlightenment in the mid-60s, as a retreat from an austere Britain too ready to funnel its children into a tedious labour market, this North Londoner began songwriting during his electronics studies at Bangor University in Wales. He is a kind of songwriting's *Beauvoir* mixed with a dash of mad genius Victorian painter Richard Dadd and the English blues-worshipping Romantics, and not a little of the preening, arrogant, desecrative clear vision and surprising lyrical turn of phrase of a Ray Davies or Arthur Loos, with a London wit not unlike The Small Faces.

If Fay is remembered at all, it is for the albums *Bilf Fay* (Now 1970) and *Time Of The Last Persecution* (Decca 1971), both of which are currently out of print. So from the Bottom Of An Old Grandfather Clock (Wooden Hill WH00012 CD) is all we have as a window on his peculiar art. This is a collection of outtakes and demos between 1966-70, when he songwrote was at its peak. Following the second album — much to the artist's annoyance (see Letters, The Wire 244), most commentators

have taken the photo of a rather bedagged looking Fay on *Persecution* to signal an impending collapse, and he has the aptitude for having disappeared off the planet. However, he is still very much alive and, while not making personal appearances, his cause has been taken up by Current 93's David Tibet, who is promising a album of new Fay material later this summer on his Durtro label.

These songs are underpinned by the lush big-band arrangements that Mike Gibbs provided for the first album, and the searing guitar presence of Ray Russell, but don't suffer at all for their absence. A succession of dead day jobs, including time as a gardener in public parks, led Fay to learn the art of creative contemplation (aka daydreaming) — a kind of Wordsworthian "was passiveness" that led him to consider himself a flower planted between the potatoes and the parsley ("Garden Song"), or as a "stranger in the field talking with the cows..." ("Sonnet in the Field"). It is a marvelous story of a singer schooled in the university of life, and transfused by his mutations on the philosopher's beard. De Chardin. There is something that recalls the films of Terence Davies in the way Fay co-opts pub songs and tells stories of relief, penned. Second World War heroes ("Just Another Song"), "Sing Us One Of Your Songs, May", "Gente Willie") Poetic metaphysics with a mock-litard cladding by a mastery of the English subtext. (RV)

The second in an ambitious 18-volume release project dedicated to the elusive architect of electronic pop **Alexis Titchens**, *Strap (The Snake, 1981 CD)* was the 1981 sequel to his Nachtschade album and his first for this burgeoning kiosk label. Say also responsible for releases by the likes of Michael Rother, Moebius, Cluster & Eno, Conrad Plank and David Szathoz. As bonus tracks "Furuncul One" and "Fast Feet" serve to indicate, this is synthesizer pop as Chris And Cozy — rather than Utopia — would have understood it at the time. Unleashing the full potential of the Moog Sonic Six and Roland Compurhythm, Titchens follows the more alien algorithms to be discovered within the far flung peripheries of electronic pop. His work reveals a clearly discernible and palpably enthusiastic sense of ending so far as the human species is concerned. "Miss Ann Thore" is a dead swirler, "Moodie Morgue" a diver of discordant new wave disco, "Die Elektrothe Heds" a danceable catatonic set to music. Ripe for reappraisal, Titchens's pursuit on *Strap* of a boldly abstract "absolute music" makes for challenging listening. Less about machines than the fates and malfunctions of the human operating system, there's also something disturbing about the theme of cybernetics. (RV)

First the players, then the music. **Song For Someone** (Psi 04-01) was trumpeter **Kenny Wheeler's** first recording for large ensemble, the

forerunner to some very important projects of later years. Now more than 30 years old, it was his attempt to find a way of getting musicians from different areas of jazz to break down the dialects and accents (remember he was a Canadian, working in London) that sometimes divided it. It was, and is, a thorough success, though inevitably a quiet and uncelebrated one, given Wheeler's natural inclination. By far the longest track, "The Good Doctor" has an infusion of free jazz intensity, partly explained by the presence on that one track of Derek Bailey, Evan Parker and Malcolm Griffiths. But for the most part these are arching structures that balance freedom and control in the manner of early records by Tony Doby (who is on hand with percussion). More than a historical document, but more than a blind reissue as well. (BM)

Sunny Murray's musical inclinations run toward collective bane — that's why he meshed better with Albert Ayler than with Cecil Taylor. 1969's *Home to Africa* (Sargeant SP0750 CD) is sadder than *Sunrise* or *An Even Bigger River* (Epic 4 A Sack). It's the best of the albums he recorded for RCA, in fact. Still, his powerful, almost personal drumming style remains dominant, even when he's not smashing the cymbals until they're the loudest sound in the mix.

The recording is raucous and raw, befitting the ad hoc nature of the sessions and the spirit of late 60s free jazz as a whole. Murray's compositions, as always, are finely spiced, based on repetitive, somewhat modal riffs that allow for screaming outbursts from each horn in turn. The assembled bands is impressive: Horace R. Africa's first line includes Lester Bowie, Roscoe Mitchell, Archie Shepp, Gerald Mercer Jr., Clifford T. Brown, and Kenneth Tenten, bolstered by pianist Osie Burnett, bassist Alan Silva, and Murray A three new faces by Jeanne Lee floats over the pair "Sons Of Africa", while Malachi Favors, Earl Freeman and Arthur Jones play bells and percussion. A deliberately out of tune of contemporaneous work by Pharoah Sanders, it takes its time, but eventually establishes a pleasant groove. Two shorter pieces, "RIP" and "Utopia" finish out the album in a more Ayler-like style. The union from riffs are louder than the solos. This only serves to emphasize the all for one! freedom (plus Jeanne Lee) spirit of the sessions, and that new legendary 1969 Paris summer. (FJ)

Conquistador (Blue Note 7243 5767492B CD) — named after the Spanish conquerors of Mexico and Peru in the 16th century — is the second of **Cecil Taylor's** two Blue Note classics, recorded a few months after *Unit Structures* in 1958. Featuring Bill Dixon on trumpet, regular cohort Jimmy Lyons on alto sax, Henry Gimes and Alan Silva on basses and Andrew Cyrille on drums, it's new reissued with a second take of the second and first track "With (Ear)" as part of

Blue Note's Rudy Van Gelder Edition. With passing time, it's clear the album doesn't conform to its free jazz blowout image, for several reasons. Alan Silva commented in *The Wire* 228 that "Unit Structures took us four months of rehearsal... people don't realise that's a well-structured piece of music, not 'free jazz'. There's a score! So the broad structure is given — as one writer commented, the aural architecture is singular, but navigable. Although there's some ecstatic improvisation here, and real drive from the 'pulse no meter' approach which Andrew Cyrille and others developed out of Elvin Jones, the music is also allowed to breathe. On the title track, for instance, Bill Dixon leads a plangent interlude, while Jimmy Lyons was near a conventional alto also player. This cooler side to *Conquistador*, missing from some of Taylor's later work, enhances its classic status. It's also good to reflect that, all participants except the late Jimmy Lyons are still playing, including the recently rediscovered Henry Gimes. (JH)

Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Mente* (Aved 4642682 CD) for two mg-modulated pianos was written in 1970. It makes a return to the fully notated compositions of the 1950s, even if the composer's subsequent major work *Stimmung* returned to intuition and performer freedom. *Mente* also shows the beginnings of the later Stockhausen emphasis on melody, the whole composition based on a single formula or matrix — a second phase in the philosophical traditions of Indian tantra yoga. What hasn't changed is the polarity of Stockhausen's thought as a pursuer of spectral total composition — the cosmic structure that moves the inner nature of sound. As he commented at the time of composition, "Mente is a musical miniature of the unitary macro-structure of the cosmos, as well as an enlargement of the unitary micro-structure... at the very heart of sound." Each piano part is amplified by two mics, modulated by a unisonized sound, and at the same time mixed with live sound. This interpretation by Janka and Arto Wittenberg, with modulations by Thomas Kessler, dates from 1998. The pianists vocalise, sparingly and also play various percussion instruments to broaden and emphasise the pervasive attack of the pianos. Don't expect electronic fireworks — piano sound and tuning is constantly modified, but extreme effects are limited, and include a boggling Masee code background. The extreme pensiveness compresses of the whole pianos, immediately prior to the coda, is a compelling inspiration. But though the Wittenbergs' interpretation has drive and clarity, it's also somewhat shivering — maybe reflecting how, in working to melody, Stockhausen hasn't been working to his strength. (AH) (Reviewed by Greta Dayal, Phil Freeman, Andy Hamilton, Ken Hoelings, Brian Morton and Rob Young



catharsis, as well as a corresponding facility across a reach of styles, from bust free beat and exotica Euro art moves through to avant punk.

Elements Of Style... opens with "Outside Tiel", an atmospheric original that builds from a sad, celestial horn arrangement as intricately plotted as the charts of pianist and composer Andrew Hill through to an increasingly strident Vandermark solo, building from inverted melodic of tone into incense. Returning rivers, instrumental John Bishop's approach to the source is a little more cautious, building a short, conversational statement from compressed phrases and degenerate, inverted echoes. Although "Outside Tiel" implies a bouncing, peppy rhythm, its full realization seems a little before bassist Kent Kessler and drummer Tim Deig, who exhibit a lack of motivational strain throughout. It's not entirely their fault, as the whole group are saddled with a disappointingly flat recording, with no real sear or zip to speak of, meaning these little hops of any duration and lightning. As such, the most effective pieces are those that circumvent conventional ballad horn dynamics altogether, such as "Intagimanto", an oblique piece of useless sculpture dedicated to the group Zu.

This Italian went to consist of drummer Jacobo Battaglia, electric bassist Massimo Pupillo and bassists saxophonist Luca Tava, and for the first half of Radical's Vandermark's Spacways into partners, drummer Hamid Drake and bassist Nate McBride, eager to lubricate the proceedings, as they work up big band virtuosity of Absolutum artforms like "Space Is The Place," "Theme De Yoze" and "You And Your Folks, Me And My Folks."

GREG WALL LATER PROPHETS

THIRTY TWO
BY ANDY HAMILTON

Greg Wall's latest addition to John Zorn's Radical Jewish Culture series is inspired by the Old Testament visions of Ezekiel — "The Vision Of The Dry Bones" and "Can These Bones Come To Life?" refer to the prophet's most famous oracles. Wall is

a pioneer of Jewish/Impass crossover, and a founder of Hallelujah New Wave. Later Prophets features longtime collaborator Aaron Alexander on percussion and Shai Badari on electric keyboards, with guitarist Gary Lucas guesting on two tracks. Wall looks to traditional synagogue chants and to his hero Albert Ayler to create something avant-garde from ancient tradition. His edgy, causticness factor — to be truthful, not as availing emotionally or stylistically as Ayler's — is partnered on "Among The Color" by Gary Lucas's brooding soundscapes, while on "Malachi" he conjures a dark vision accompanied just by the percussion of Aaron Alexander.

Though inspired by traditional chants, all but two tracks are original compositions. "Death And Resurrection" is the most Messianic, while elsewhere the Jewish influence is less direct. Some tracks try too hard to pack in a variety of moods but Later Prophets is an unusual venture, and one of the most satisfying of the Radical Jewish Culture imprint.

BILL WELLS PICK UP STICKS

LEAF 8474
BY KEITH MCKING

Doesn't disband Falkirk's answer to San Ra for the success of his jazz edicts and big bands, Bill Wells has recently been found operating in more intimate modes, both in his live records and a number of delicate pop appearances for the more ostentatious wing of the Scottish indie community based around The Poodles and the Geographic label. Another interesting development is his work with the sampler and computer, which somehow manages to retain the same slightly awed naïveté as his instrumental compositions and arrangements.

For this diverting mini-album, Wells draws on the diverse talents of Stefan Schneider, singer/keyboards/Barbara Margenstern and trombonist Anne Whitehead. The result is his longest work to date, a delightful translation of the tender, tender melodicism of his live album Also In White into subtle, peased electronics. Schneider's bass and synthesizer add some of the stealthy, spidery fervor of his main group Rooster Rot. Wells restricts himself to the computer, looping a selection of brittle snags

and clicks that serve as low-key rhythm tracks.

Although all these slender pieces are co-wrote, anyone who knows Wells's work will be familiar with the sparse melancholy of the melodies, played with beautiful restraint by Whitehead, whose approach here is unrecognizable from the stident G.D. Jazz earnestness she purveyed in the 80s. Her muted, enveloping phrases on "The Dust Of Mirrors" have all the delicacy and grace of Eastern calligraphy, but retain that indefinable earthy honesty on which Wells is justly building a formidable reputation.

BRIAN WOODBURY VARIETY ORCHESTRA BRIAN WOODBURY VARIETY ORCHESTRA

REH WOODBURY HERBAY CD
BY GUYE BELL

This is an acoustic big-band album, a big-hearted affair full of irresistible charm, and played with such clean living, all-American flair that I feel like a heel confessing that there was little I wanted to hear less. On the opening "Live The Jams", brass chords record RWA sax quartet, barjos and violins swirl through the undergrowth while a serene pedal solo floats into the background. It's intelligent fun — with titles like "Jesus Christ Almighty" and "Theology For Kennedy And Connally" you know that gloomy pie is off the menu — and it's \$8 per cent written down.

Woodbury studied both with musical comedy king Sam Leifer and Deep Learning guru Pauline Ovens. He's written theme songs for American Saturday morning cartoons and has a such Pacific musical in the pipeline called Kila Waila. He can clearly whip out a wacky arrangement while rolling off a log, but there is a line called today and sometimes Woodbury dances awfully close to it. My heart sank as the swelling Manchu trumpets and clumping backdrop of "Gartenzauber" announced our arrival in cosmic Mexican territory "Long May She Wave" is Prog as the Plus, Henry Cow with a skipping rap. "Theology" has more thoughtful writing, a few beautiful, and a passage of acrobatic, fertile close-harmony vocals. Most of the album was originally written for a live New York show in 1989, so Woodbury has likely moved on

Meanwhile the sheer view and good humor of his Variety Orchestras will attract plenty who prefer their postmodern jazz free of solos or angst.

KATSURA YAMAUCHI SALMO SAX

SALMO SINGING ASSOCIATION SPATION CD
BY GUYE BELL

"Is the nature I like music?" says Katsura Yamauchi in the handwritten sleevelets to his first solo album. Sounds uncontroversial enough, except that saxophone improvising is traditionally a highly urban, indoor pursuit, and maybe Yamauchi's fondness for fresh air and the outdoor life (his record label is called Salmo Flying Association) is part of the secret behind his original take on free improvisation.

The opening "Salmo" is an unhurried exploration of a tundraing phrase on saxophone, repeated and modified. It evokes flowing water, or possibly a salmon's leap, and Yamauchi closes his album with a second version, recorded standing up in a Japanese river near a small waterfall. There is a tradition of shakuhachi players practicing by a waterfall. Another slight link with Japanese flute repertoire is his habit of building a piece from a very limited selection of melodic phrases and sounds. "Impressions Of Asia" works off a melancholy tune on soprano — lyrical, spacious, Yamauchi has all the time as the world "Kapur" portantly weaves a strand from long, husky alto sounds, keys dapping shut the notes. "Oshirayeshika Oshira" pays homage to Shimo Yoshihide by associating him with an important family of salmon. This scene, deep humming, pushing an unstable westerline on the baritone, is like a hypothesis of an in plumbing, but the regular patterns mean it's also a tune. Yamauchi uniquely plays free improvisation you can sing along with.

50 this year, Yamauchi has spent his life in remote sites in west Japan, organizing the old concert for visitors like Millard Graves or Derek Bailey, and struggling to hold down a full time company job while playing music. A few years ago he gave up the job and took off impulsively for a free world Europe, playing alongside Oshira. Always with a keen ear for on-air work, Oshira stars him nightly, writing, "Is really both a new and veteran artist. I am greatly refreshed by his energetic and confident performance." □

Label Lore

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Distribution

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Poser

The label has a huge archive of unpublished

field and radio recordings, previously published on cassette recordings, and film and video from Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The label is continually expanding the archive by travelling and acquiring new documents. Also, it has many independent associates with similar archival material which will match the aesthetic of the SF library and a vast network of worldwide contacts with similar interests.

Brief history

SF is a new label based on the dedication to discovering and uncovering styles of music,

cultural ceremonies, shorthand and radio transmissions, and live sound anomalies from Africa, the Middle East and Asia, which have been all but ignored by other labels. We stand behind the material we release and consider it as some of the most imaginative and expressive music, sight and sound the world has to offer. Most of the items we present are not available in the Western world and we know that they stand alone as documents worthy of attention. We have not been given the opportunity to hear and see these artefacts from other, mostly available sources, so we are taking the opportunity to present them ourselves in a variety of natural and creative ways.

Statement of intent

SF is focused on an aesthetic of ethnography and soulful experience inspired by music and culture, world travel, research and

the pioneering recording labels of the past including Occo, Smithsonian Folkways, Lynwood, Nonesuch, Experimental, Bahnermer, Phylaxand, Chant Du Monde, BAW, Bergant, Topic and many others.

Other activities

No other activities planned at this time

Choice cuts

Radio Morocco
Radio Palestine
Folk And Pop Sounds Of Sumatra Vol 1
I Remember Syria
Process Nodone

Info & manifests: Alan Bishop

Reviewed by David Keenan

66 THE WIRE

Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

MATTHEW DEAR
BACKSTROKE
SPECTRAL SPONGE CD/127

Matthew Dear's *Backstroke* mini-album sees the Detroit producer (who also goes under the monikers of False and Jibbeqaw) continuing to hone his hybrid taste on Detroit and Cologne Techno. Where his previous singles have often been marked by the disruptive clutter of the class clown throwing objects at the blackboard, *Backstroke* is marked by a much darker, more subdued mood.

His a-thankas is large part to the distinctly southern vocals of tracks like "Gut Well," "Good Girl" and the slurring chug of "I Know Howser." The real difference here is in Dear's songwriting, which has never been stronger. While "Dog Days" was the most memorable turn on last year's *Green Luck* (he *Moan*, almost every one of the eight tracks here rides on an unmistakable hook from the monochromatic prying of "Takes On You" to the chugging strings in the swollen disco of "And In The Night"). Through it all, Dear's lilting rhythms stand out, flicking like a candle flame at the moment the wick disappears into molten wax.

DEPTH CHARGE
HI VOLTAGE MAN
DC RECORDING DCMA 12

J Sael Kane, lover of electro, breaks, and kung fu — not necessarily in that order — returns to his Depth Charge persona with "Hi Voltage Man", a concept track punctuated by the requisite samples of film dialogue (shrieks, groans, and the shouted, "I am the high-voltage man!"). A sluggish analogue bass melody pushes unrelentingly forward, and a stonemason's unrelentingly

The *Alpaca's* "Isle Of England", though, is far more likely to conduct actual electricity. Flooded with strings and acoustic guitars — the "folktronica" hallmarks of far-ouevre subbed artists like Four Tet — the tune cycles through the changes, recharging with every chord progression. The sound of fingers on steel strings becomes a new percussive signature as the restless strumming flings out aporia in every direction.

JUSTUS KÖHNCKE
TIMECODE
KONTRAST KONTRAST 68.137

In person, the *Who's Name Show!* host Ben Spedard is cool and kindly enough, but Colagrosso's Antu Kirmiche proves himself to be a sumptuous sentimentalist in his recorded words. The show's embarrassingly earnest cover of "The Answer Is 'Yes'" — stretched together with a lovely contemporary guitar melody! Sausage's version of "Pretend Prudence" — is at the end of you need, of course, but even the disco House of "Timecode," which takes on the precise mistakes of a pair of dry, cracked lips that have been purged, wetted, and returned to wetter in an autumn breeze, is not afraid to bleed behind its cool, unpeppared facade. It's the things that the genre loves, rubbing like eager calves against the forward shock of the ticking clock, as though their breath could spark the stopwatch, stopping time entirely. The tune never diverts from its onward roll, but the lingering sense of longing is enough to stain the demagogue in its tracks.

SUTEKH & O.LAMM
SIX RESIDUA
ACTIVE SUSPENSION AEP54 120

San Francisco's Suzuki and Francis O'Lama, a star on the French label Ancêtre Suspension, tackle each other's work in a remote-off, 12th floor of epic proportions: "The two track, 12' off the clock in around 30 minutes. Suzuki's track is called 'The Dukk' and O'Lama's song 'Party CD, holding together torn bombones, standup bass, darting percussion and unhinged riffs into a headbusting, two-step pattern that squeals and skews in a way that can only be called Dukkholish (if it works). The duck and ducks like a duck." Ribbons of harmonics and scraps of punk '87 alter like a mad scientist's concoction. The two tracks, like O'Lama's previous "Pneum," from Suzuki's *Musik* above Fall, into a mammoth, three part workout that begins with a polyrhythmic gunn of hearts reaching boards. Villains meet enveloped patterns before despatching into a spray of organs and overmen And bleats. Posing some concepts entirely new, the final piece is a 12' off the clock in around 30 minutes, performed by O'Lama and friends in a

weathered indie rock fashion; it sounds a bit like Stereolab leading the faithful to the promised land where the digital lions lie down with the analogue lambs.

**VARIOUS
GRIME**
RENNET USA

The critic Jane Howell has already pointed out that Replich's compilation of deconstructed post-Gothic isn't really "Gothic" in the conventional sense. As the quasi-goths have come to be known, Gene typically refers to his haunted PlayStation clones of Dione and Wiley and Ito! Deep and is usually identified without the trope-time bank of its MCs Replich's com, influenced by the Eastern modalities of Hasegawa Productions, the classificationic sort of duology, and even the tortured historical references of the 1970s. However, the Garage version of No U-turn's classed language compilation, imagining a Terminator-like future where there's no human left to split the face as a mechanized dead, Whatever you care to call it, it's rarely exhilarating stuff. Platonism's "Pump Up The Jam" is a full-on sequence for a hydrogen-infused catastrophe, and McKenzie's third "Intelligence" is like an atom-punk mass, never designed to judge from its piston-pumping strains. I wish there had been a little more extremity along the lines of Disease Art's award-winning "The End" - while Gene's tracks always teeter on the precipice, cushioned strings set his magnets pulling the listener back from total immersion. The album's last two songs, "Rings such a Clearly Bold" and "Black Hole" still manage to turn the elements of genre kink into something so much more terrifying.

WOBBLY
MULTIPLE READY
 ROMATO ROMATOD004 120

I owe my man Sebastian Koch, fellow writer and resident of San Francisco's Mission District, one burrito. "Yo, Wobbly's gone Techno," said Koch, over a plate of rice and beans. I called bullshit, bet a Mission meal — and boy, was I wrong. The last outing from the Bay Area's plunderphonic outlaw, the Tigerbeat6 disc *Wild Way*, was a beautiful mess of R&B radio-did swirl, its beats

could only be described as diaphanous. But "General Peedy", shaped from unrecognisable horn bleats and swathes of bossy yowl, wears its fork as aptly as a hepcat who left the hanger in his suit jacket – and still manages a graceful interlude or two.

Blevin Bledium wastes no time in taking a tiny jackhammer to the dancefloor, but People Like Us take a rug with cut-up Country samples. Satekh, who's never afraid to get his snark on, creeps up behind Wobbly and sends him spinning like a top into a maelstrom of two-stepping kicks and amplified keening. Wobbly wobbles, but he doesn't fall down.

ROBAG WRUHME
WÜZZELBUD "KK"
MUSIK, KUNST, LITERATUR, COLOSSE

Adorno's debut album, the almost unthinkably titled *Wozzeck* (RCA) is the most rhythmically intricate, uncommonly textured, and definitively progulsive Techno record of the year. It is, in fact, the best I have heard so far. Do the dance, what Jena, Germany's Wozzeck — aka Gabor Szabotzky, one half of the Wignight Brothers — attempts is no more than an update of the rhythmic riffs in Tachels well-regarded work that Audion applied on records like 1994's *Art* and 1995's *We Are Rhy*. But considering the thousands of examples of lacustrine rhythmic tripping left behind by Autechre's imitators, Wozzeck's accomplishments are even more startling, lying in a fine line between functionalism and something like rhythmic Tourette's Syndrome. Beats from internal organs, from the floor, from the street, from passing fragments nodderly across the floor and threaten to derail the proceedings with neurotic

Whismie crawls heavily on the desiccated palette of Perlen but he rounds out his sound with fleshy, fatty tones that leave a trail of goo over every stainless surface. One wonders if this is the birth of gangsta Techno, if only because so many sounds seem to have been sampled from gun cocks and clattering shells hitting dry pavement. But the eponymous lead single, a roiling Schaffel monster, samples Daphnia's cryptic outburst, "They say the owl was a baker's daughter" only adds to the record's charms. □

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Reviewed by Steve Barker

CREATION REBEL
DUB FROM CREATION
ON-UP SOUND/BEAT CROSS CO

REBEL VIBRATIONS

ON PULCHERRIMA BOMBACIOS

Creation Rebel's first album *Bombacios* from Creation was released in March 1978. Originally a studio credit known as the *Kaats* utilised by the mighty *Black Sabbath*, the name was effectively hijacked by the young Adrian Sherwood with the same equivalent of *Psychoflop*. Now reassured for the first time, it comes with two additional *Fat I* tracks, "Frontline Speeches" and its version, both on the rhythm of the album's opener and title track. Four other tracks were dubbed from Eric Floyd's *Lower Than Green* album as playfully misinterpreted. The album has a mix of styles of ska and roots. On 100% much tougher dubwise Rebel Vibrations. *Fat I* was played by the imported Style Scott. Both sets were instrumental dub affairs and can now be appreciated as experimental breeding grounds for what was to follow. Of the six brass bands, Dr. Pablo's *Black Panther* band was the most successful. *Pewer*'s sound, at the remainder of the sessions mainly *Liberationists* songs. But on *I* devotes only

DUBPHONIC
SMOKE SIGNALS
HAWKMETRACKS BAS0017 C

The sound of Dubphonic is already implanted in the subconscious of many as they dreamily insist on a remix of G-Stone's "Gimme" on the cult TV show *Six Feet Under*, included here. A further triumph was their handling of Lunsel Thompson's "Jah Jah Is A Guiding Star" on a Blood & Fire remix compilation for Echo Beach. Following their touring support of Japanese collective Audio Active, the French trio of Stefano Goldman, Sylvain Mosca and Alexis Maurs aka Alakid are back courtesy of WarnerBros, pioneers of the Dub Federation for All.

If the mission of Duetronic is to achieve the sonic equivalent of a warm glow then they are already there — by the time we get to "Cymbout Love Affair" and the gorgeous state of Christian Lechevrete's malleable trumpet, the effect is almost physical. This should come with a warning about listening while driving or operating machinery.

FENIN
SUSTAIN EP
METEOSOUND METEO ORN 12"

Shidlovskiy's club expert ventures across the corridor to the offices of Daniel Petri's Metropolis. Lars Fenn might be driven by duty, but thankfully he's also constrained by his own awareness of the techno excesses that can make many of his European contemporaries sound comparatively old-fashioned nowdays. Following on from his well-received *Driven EP* he again wisely curbs any exponential tendencies by confining the tunes under a vinyl format EP with six tracks in the style of a jump-up end of Mark and Mertz around the corner at Rhythm & Soul. Fenn's first collaboration on record with a reggae singer comes with Gortzi on "No CW." The uptempo opus "3 Sirens" seems to herald a dose of 70s funk but the groove comes quick and stays. There's also a radical electronic dub in the shape of "Half A Song" and "Warning." The only slip is in "Slake," which relies on the old-*school* Technobus shuffle.

BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS
GROOVING KINGSTON 12: THE
JAD MASTERS 1970-1972

UNIVERSAL/ISLAND 0044 1845 7325 3630

The first in a promised epic series in the pre-historic history of reggae's most influential standard-bearers, achieved as a deal between Daddy Smokey JAD Import and the Universal Music Group, the *Roots* box set is a collection has appeared on JAD over the past few years but suffered from poor or non-existent UK distribution. It is lavishly presented, unlike format contains three CDs. The first features early Tuff Gong output including proto versions of "Loudly Up Yourself", "Concrete Jungle", "Soca Kream", "Humblebird" and "I And Mya Di Not", while the second contains the 1977-80 material from London sessions including the long lost "Music Gans Tashy", while the third disc has a re-tread of the much loved Lee "Sonch" Perry sessions. The importance of the set is that it's complete, written and Perry expert Kenney Collingwood, reworks the myths of Marley, his portraiture him as a young, hip, conscious musician, and the reggae scene as a complete package and last, but not least, it provided the soundtrack for

the growth of black consciousness. Musically, among the 69 tunes here there are 23 versions – a seriously brave move for this opening set of the series that should be applauded.

SLY & ROBBIE
RIDDIM: THE BEST OF SLY &
ROBBIE IN DUB 1978 TO 1985
TROJAN TROJDD182 200CD

Although the title may overstate its claim in stretching the 'test of definition' through to 1985, this is still a great introduction to Jamaican steel. It details drum and bass due. The Tax production unit they created in the early 80s may have been responsible for the electronic rhythms they introduced to the dancehall scene. It is hard to prove that Sly & Robbie had done it, but way late in seasons run by the likes of Jah Thomas, Barry Lee and Linval Thompson. As members of the Revolutionaries, creators of the militant rovers sound. Sly's explosive style and Robbie's smoothly melodic basslines revitalised old riddimms. The duo's fusion of reggae and electronic combinations I expected boredom to set in well before halfway in this massive two CD set but after turned out to be a delight, especially the scratches of Gregory Isaacs vocals in selections from his great *Slam Dub* set and the intro to versions produced by Nazareth 'Jah Thomas' Stone. The CD is a great introduction to the Brown's 'Resolution Part 2' in which S&R replace bass with a heavenly pool of steel pipes.

TWILIGHT CIRCUS
DUB FROM THE SECRET
VAULTS

RCR RU80605 CD

In his ten years or so in the guise of Twilight Circus (Sound System), Ryan Moore has been so prolific that there were always bound to be some tunes laitering at the end of quarter inch tapes, on cassettes at the back of drawers, hidden behind the mixing desk, etc, and here they are introduced by new friend Big Youth at the album's opening. The tracks vary from the R&B styled noodling of "East Of Memphis" to an 80s Lesslie Butler "Electric Africa", right through to the cool, too short binghi-sleeze groove "Lift Off". So Moore becomes a sort of do-dadly version of Monroe Male or Tommy Guerrero – no bad thing.

LEE PERRY
DUB-TRYPTYCH
TROJAN T00172 SRCD

This essential double CD has a ton of discal goodies! Earlier dub albums, the original 1973 JA version of *Clock and Dagger*, the legendary collaboration between Daddy and Tubby, *Blackboard Jungle*, and the largely ignored 1975 set *Revolution Dub*, all cleaned up with bonus tracks added. Clock starts with the much sampled intro "Greetings music lovers," and moves into spooky horn instrumentals and drum and bass duos with the more famous Dillinger's DJ Piece "Big Organizer." Bonus tracks come from a rare 1974 "T", there are also instrumental and dub versions of Perry at his rare groove best on the "Jungle Line" rhythm. *Revolution Dub* was released in Jamaica but appeared on Carnival Sound, and is a recently bootlegged out of France. Perry takes pleasure with his own material where others tread more timidly, like brazenly depicting blood from The British album *Dance In The House*, while also dwelling on a repertoire of bodily functions.

VARIOUS
STUDIO ONE DUB
SOUL, JAZZ STREG CDLP

The death of a major figure in music usually signals the start of a distasteful wave of cash-in-reissues, so we have been fortunate over the past few years that Clement Dodd presided over excellent Studio One retrospective programmes with Heartbeat in the USA and later Soul Jazz in the UK prior to his demise. The latest addition to the series is fitting, as many of the rhythms were recorded in the Caribbean, and it is good that they continue to be reissued 25 years after their creation. Included are "Pretty Yellow", with dubbed vocals running through the mix from the hit "Pretty Lookie", pure in name at least to "Running Down" from Delroy Wilson's "Run Run", and perhaps the most beloved rhythm of recent times "Creation Version" derived from Dawn Penn's "Too, No, No". Interviews with Dodd and engineer Sybil Morris are also, along with Syd Buchanan's response for engineering duties, on the CD. The CD also includes a few less tantalising versions of the recording sessions. Another vinyl chapter in this excellent series.



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Stephan Mathias & Si-cut.db

Electronica

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

CHRISTOPHE BAILLEAU COSMET NIHIL

LE CRI DU LAKHART MOORE CD

Released simultaneously with mini-album *Midiwave* on the Laemmig label. Soundcrusher/Kiwi, Christophe Bailleau's first album to appear under his own name is one of subtle fragmentation and busy disorientation. A French musician residing in Brussels, where he runs his own flexible imprint, his previous projects have included La Chesca and Glyth. He uses a laptop to transform the sound of his guitar, seamlessly shredding and rebuilding the sustain, as on "Orange" and "Petit Obscure", or building it into the hiss rippling waves of "Iris Blue". However, Bailleau is also not afraid, as with the plaintive shattering of "Kinklets", occasionally to leave guitar untreated.

BOOKS ON TAPE

SINGS THE BLUES

NO TYPE MINTOBA CD

There's no better way to tell a girl how you feel about her than compiling a personal mixtape unless, like La Tarantula artist Todd Matthew Dreetin, you plunder her record collection and put the results on CD. Emerging from girlfriend-kern's wet sack, Dreetin shows a good feel for the left and right separating the loop from the riff, conjuring impressive combinations of drums, guitar and organ with "See You in Tokyo" and "Republic Of", as well as the sticky melting build of "Church Bus" and the incoherence of "The Crucial".

CRITERION AND DOILY

CRITERION AND DOILY

BROOKLYN BEATS RISE12 CD

Delving deep into New York's urban abstract, Criterion Thomson and Heather Leiner, also Doily, have continued to release some of their recent 12" releases on one CD. Thus we have all six tracks from Doily's 2000 *Mattress Of The Universe* collection, together with Criterion's *Mat Plax* from the same year, plus his 2000 release *Red Canal*. Doily favors a bustling rambo sound that comprises against any melodic sense of order, while Criterion goes for more open structures and earlier assemblages of sound, as is evident from the nagging dub, crackling distortions and street drumming on early tracks "Gassy" and "Hollow Point".

DAS BIERBEBEN

NO FUTURE NO PAST

SHKATAPAT STRIKING CD

More blinding brought straight from the local beerbeats as German Techno punk collective Das Bierbeben gets another long hot thirty summer with a collection of nihilistic anthems, machine madness and strident calls for boozed up youth action, all delivered with inextinguishable gyp charm. Like *Gliss On Speed* but without the opportunistic moments, these guys don't play guitar either, favouring digital electronic beats and striding disco keyboards that sound light but leave a lasting impression. And never before have the words "No Future" been delivered on record with such unsettling calmness.

EDIT

CRYING OVER PROSE FOR NO REASON

PLANET NU 30866 CD

Painstakingly lashing together hooks, jerks and spears into stylistically edited instrumentals, La laptop jockey Ed Ma's first album as edit shares some of the banter, melancholy strokes to be found on Cécile's recent *Being Bolder* but without displaying any of the latter's incisive top 40 sensibilities. This is no bad thing as the silky data streaming on "Laundry" and the classy rhythmic undercurrent of "Anti" demonstrate. Acoustic things proliferate smoothly throughout but it's the wickily random doubling on some of the bassists that keeps you listening.

RICHARD H KIRK (INTONE)

UNRELEASED PROJECTS VOL

ONE 1996-2000

INTONE 04 CD

UNRELEASED PROJECTS VOL TWO 1995-1997

INTONE 04 CD

Organised thematically rather than chronologically, the first two volumes culled from Richard H Kirk's archive of unreleased material recorded during the 1990s make for funky fresh listening. No one else has worked electronic beats so systematically through so many forms of dance music or treated them with such a high degree of musical intelligence. Predominantly devoted to Techno, disco and House rhythms, the first volume features tracks recorded by Kirk under various aliases ranging from the more familiar *Saxsax* and *Nitrogen* through to *Ubu Rahmen* and *Ubersenshoch*. Volume two takes a radical swerve towards electro, breakbeats and Latin, with Kirk adopting even stranger identities, including *Drk Maps*, *Drk Xivier* and *The Revolutionary Army* (of the *Intense Jesus*).

KENNY LARKIN

THE NARCOSIST

PEACE FROGGETTA CD

In which one of the main movers in Detroit Techno smooths out the rumples in his satin shades, pops another Belgian chocolate in his mouth and declares unlimited and endless love to himself. This condition, usually referred to in medical circles as "Bake Baker Syndrome", has been known to have a devastating effect on people who spend too much time in studios. Fortunately, that's not the case here. Pass gently over Kenny giving a big ghost out to himself on the sleeve, and *The Narcosist* contains some remarkable work. "Mona E Marie" cuts together jinking beats with haunting guitars, "In The Mermaids" delicately gathers strength over its nine minutes, while "NiteRite" is Acid quirkiness embedded in dreamily echoing keyboards.

LOSCIL

FIRST NARROWWS

KRANKY KRAVING CD

Named after the first gap at the mouth of Canada's Burned inlet, the most entrance into

Vancouver from the Pacific Ocean, Scott Morgan's third album as Loscil is also the first one to use input sourced from real instruments. Inspired by Jason Jaque on *Fender Rhodes*, Tim Lowman on guitar and Kyra Remy on cello, he uses customised software, samples and premixed sections to create a passive cycle of deeply beautiful compositions. From the delicate chiming of "Lacy Dub" to the oblique descending lines of the title track, *First Narrows* is a work of drifting coherence and gently blurred boundaries.

ORBITAL

BLUE ALBUM

ORBITAL 1 CD

What the Herbol Brothers have already described as their last LP together refers back to their first two landmark releases from 1991 and 1993, known today as the Green and Brown albums respectively. Its content also makes a return to the kind of intricately interwoven melody, seamless progressions and aching harmonies that characterise their earlier sound, offering both a conclusion and a final summation. Even so, there are a few surprises. Ron and Russell Maer from Sparks join Paul and Phil for the ghoulish "Acid Punks". "Beth Time" is a tribute to Wendy Carlos, and actor Christopher Eccleston's tag-team scientists on "You Lot" in a speech lifted from the film *Second Genesis*. Concluding with "One Perfect Sunset", featuring Dead Can Dance's Lisa Gerrard on vocals, there are more ways to go than this.

OSSO BUCCO/

LUJBILDEN & PILOTEN

OSSO BUCCO/LUJBILDEN & PILOTEN

NOISOMD 040001 CD

This elegantly packaged split CD features the work of American sound collageur Gregg Kowalsky, aka Oso Bucco and Kristofer Shrim, whose recordings are filled over with wacky noises and slight absurdity. Whether using field recordings or more conventional instrumentation, such as keyboards, theremin and melodic, both composers show an interest in rhythm, gently stretching those moments of suspension between events. "This is the beard we are always growing", runs the Noisomd mission statement, and it shows.

TEAM SHADETEK

BURNERISM

WARP WAP176 CD

An audible equivalent to urban camouflage, the Team ShadeTek sound is all layered effects and wrecked outlines but gets the job done. The true function of camouflage is not to obscure but to draw attention away from an object by offering itself in its place. Similarly the abstract geytrotechnical graffiti forms alluded to in the title of their debut release allows the eye to travel rapidly across the regulated lines and planes of urban space. The shredded lines are set in motion by Scott and Zach Zarnow from their *Shi-Bro* studio, recently released from Manhattan to Berlin, make for distracted, heady listening.

TERMINAL 11

DON MAXIMO - POSTMOD

PREMAX

PREMAX 01 CD

Grand interlocking structures and micromanagered outbursts of intense digital incident keep you enthralled as Mike Castaneda from the American Southwest goes frantic over tracks which, as Castaneda himself puts it, are "based on an extreme lack of sleep and attention span". There are two separate releases comprising 21 individual compositions linked together over a breathtaking 76 minutes. The material is the first part, "Don Maximo", stands as an accredited follow-up to the breakbeat beats and samples of his *Speed Modified* debut. Meanwhile "Postmod Premax" - short for "post modified pre maximo" - offers galvanising moments of split second transience, conceived in a furious ecstasy of improvisation, it works.

TWO LONE SWORDSMEN

FROM THE DOUBLE GONE

CHAPEL

WARP PROMO CD

Andy Weatherall and Keith Tannwood plug in the amps, strap hand on the foot pedal and start flexing their tabacco while the rest of us carefully step on our neck bones. The swigger and lurch that *The Solons Of Paradise* could score up on broke like "Too Thick" back in the day now haunts the opener "Stick Up", as Two Lone Swordsmen rediscover dirty guitars, bass heavy hits and drums that don't know when to quit. It feels rough and raw and sketchy, especially on the cover of *The Gun Club's* "Sea Bear", but it'll do fine for now.

VENETIAN SHARES

HORSE AND GOAT

SLASHBACK 040001 CD

It's hard not to realise the cover of a CD release when it features fabulously depraved artwork by painter Trevor Brown, as pink oases thoughtfully obscured from the buying public by a heavily shaded title card, still harder when the album itself is not all that great to begin with. Aaron Funk's first release for new Canadian label Splitlight is a short excursion into rippled beats and high velocity rambolance. It heaves and twitches around, showing great energy but little direction during its 25 minutes, by which time you'll be back gazing at the artwork again.

WAGON CHRIST

SORRY I MAKE YOU LUSH

NUOVA TUNE 28041 CD

Wayward Cornish maestro Luke Vibert ups the ante with a sparkling new release under his Wagon Christ alias. Breezy, disorientated, unburied, its content seems an instant surface report through a black display of dips and outs. Among many pleasures here, "Saddle Glade" is a mutant Brazilian office party, "The Farinas" intersects switches from the old *Man 2000* TV commercial into its surrealistic accumulation of greetings and "So-Fi Starmites" is a headbashed inner vision. Add in a *QuickTime* video of Wagon Christ disassembling "Recover" to the package and you've set for the summer. □

Global

Reviewed by Clive Bell

DAVID DARLING & BUNUN THE WULU MUDANIN KATA SYNCHRON MUSIC CO.

In 1996, German popsters Enigma sampled the singing of an elderly Taiwanese aboriginal couple, and had a massive hit with the ironically titled "Return to Innocence," the theme of that year's Olympics. The first Taiwanese couple known of the record was when a friend heard it on the radio and a noisy court case ensued. Cellist David Darling's collaboration with a choir of aboriginal Bunun singers, from Wulu village in Taiwan, offers hope that this kind of project can be approached in a more respectful way. The Bunun choir sound like a whole community, led and all, giving voice in an unadorned style, with rich eight-part harmonies and glorious major chords. Darling's velvety cello is multitracked to weave a sensuous, tactile contour around the voices. Complete with ocarinas, flaps and creaking moccasins in the background, it's a New Age's wet dream, but you'd need a heart of stone not to be moved by this Technicolor marriage of Bunun innocence and ECM-style swirling luxury. Darling has fun plucking a blues in cello line until he produces a shrill and response ("Waka! Waka!"), and introduces a stirring version of the Bunun traditional prayer "Yakobakut." Constantly sliding upwards in pitch, it's an ingeniously constructed piece of a cappella vocalizing that sounds like it was composed by God.

TALOUN GËSSËSSÉ ETHIOPIQUES 17 BLUDA 823581 CD

Like Bing, Frank and Dixie rolled into one concept asperat, Taloun Gëssëssé has been immensely popular in Ethiopia since the 1950s and has performed in Africa today (he had his first forays in the singer with the Imperial Hotel Guard Band under the patronage of Emperor Haile Selassie). Gëssëssé's vocal style is highly ornamented but accessible, and this pack of his 1970s releases is a great pleasure. According to compiler Francis Falato, all contemporary Ethiopian singing stars have two repertoires, one modern, the other rooted in tradition. So it's fascinating to hear a wedding song like "Kulan Markaleesh" ("I who made you up with love?"), where jazz piano and bass cohabit with traditional singing and a clapping rhythm. This is one of seven "modernist" songs arranged for a small group by Mulatu Astatke, and represents the darker, starker side of Gëssëssé's work. Elsewhere he sings out in a more party groove with the Army Band, the Police Orchestra and his old pals in the Body Guard Band.

DAUD KHAN TRIBUTE TO AFGHANISTAN FELMAY FFB97 CD

Based in Germany where he heads the Academy of Indian Music in Cologne, Daud Khan keeps the classical Indian tradition of Afghan music, performing ragas and lighter ghazals, quite dear to their Indian cousins. His instrument, a harmonium, three stringed chuk of

mullberry wood, is the rubab lute, ancestor of India's sarod. Its dark, echoing notes have an ancient quality compared to tabla. Daud Khan plays a set filled with dignity and personality. The Felmay label is to be commended for including 12 minutes of video, in which both rubab and sarod can be seen in action and in close-up.

RAUSHAN ORAZBAEVA AKKU FELMAY FFB97 CD

Looking like a diminutive cello with its front torn off, the *kyi-kapit* is the bowed, two-string spike fiddle of Kazakhstan in Central Asia. Fretted with owl feathers and jangling bits of metal, it has a minor pitched inside its soundbox. This mysterious paraphernalia dates back to its recent use as a shaman's instrument. With shamanistic practices outlawed during the communist years, the *kyi-kapit* has been reinvented as an art instrument with new freedoms. To wit, the freedom to be played in public by women. Raushan Orazbaeva, a 30-year-old veteran of folk orchestras, plays with soul and a wonderful tone like gitty century. Her bewitching solos explore the tenth century notes of the Kazakh *bert* tradition, moving on to the 19th century and the first compositions for *kyi-kapit*. The rich sound of the gut strings wells over into ethereal harmonies, particularly when Orazbaeva imitates a haunting party of howling wolves, or the beating wings of swans in flight. Elsewhere she sets lyrical melodies over a swooping drone, borrowing from the parallel *dombra* lute tradition. A fine solo collection.

VARIOUS ETHIOPIQUES 18: ASGUEBBA! BLUDA 823582 CD

In 1991 an 18-year young culture, the consequences of Ethiopian civil war, was lifted, and Addis Ababa's nightlife exploded in a countless hour in the walled music clubs. Folk musicians working these clubs are known as *Azmari*, pouring out a torrent of sarcasm, social commentary, subtle erotic lyrics or simply the blues, in return for tips from customers. *Azmari* are the equivalent of the grots of West Africa or the *Tarab* of Romania, but to my ears recall motormouth Mucci on North London pirate radio. The *Azmar* (an *Azmar* should urgle on the *dekol*) pays tribute to these restless performers, and it is unusual in the Ethiopiques series, as it consists of contemporary recordings rather than archives from the 1970s. Singers are accompanied on the big messenger fiddle or accordion and drum. Some of Gize Gizey and newcomer Eschabou Abegnou's fiddle playing is wonderfully fluent, but there's a desperate, lit on the edge quality about many of these performances.

VARIOUS MEETING: TWO WORLDS OF MODAL MUSIC - INDIAN RAGA & MEDIEVAL SONG HARMONIA MUNDO HMC95521 CD

This musical bridge between Indian and medieval Europe is embodied in the person of American

Ken Zuckerman. For more than 30 years, he has studied sarod lute with Ali Akbar Khan, and meanwhile teaches improvisation in medieval music at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis. Taking four different modes, he each he constructs a sequence of high improvisations and medieval songs (performed by tenor Dominique Villard), switching between sarod and European lute. The results are an intriguing, sensitive, mainly cool and elegant, though the temperature rises when the tables of Sapan Chaudhuri go mano a mano with the Persian *zarb* drum of Kayvan Chemir.

VARIOUS THE MUSICAL SILK ROAD ACCORDIS CRISTIS A151 CD

Whether we look back historically to the medieval trading caravans of the Silk Road, or grimly forward to the Döhl Pipeline Superhighway, Central Asia is an area we are all going to learn more about. The nomadic lutes of Turkmenistan or Kirghistan sham forth driving rhythms that compare up life on horseback, while the urban styles of Uzbekistan are just starting to have an impact abroad. Uzbek singer Munajat Yulievna contributes a remarkable track to this long, full double CD compilation based in a book (in *deluxe* effect) spelt by dark elevenets and poor translations. It's a masterpiece in how to create an exotic, chillout groove with no electric instruments. Behind her airy vocalic notes, the ensemble employs and moans, in line with the song's title, "The Beekeeper." Another Uzbeki standout is a haunting duet on the dark-toned solo fiddle by Tugan Altunai. There are several intriguing Central Asian tracks here, including previously unreleased field recordings, but overall the Silk Road tag feels less like a proper musical concept, more like a handy hook on which to hang a bunch of Asian items. There is much fine stuff from the double solo techniques of Iran's Ali Reza Gharbani to the charming lute chamber music of Japan's Enko Chida. Best is the subtle intelligent voice of Pakistani Sufi vocalist Abida Parveen. And instrumental gems include an astonishing fare-up of Turkish *sa* playing by Ali Ekber Çilek, and the Iraqis out of Mounir Badli in his fantasy of apocalyptic *badhr* marches out to Renaissance Spain, thus embodying not so much the Silk Road as a possible unity of Islamic culture from the Middle East to Gibraltar.

VARIOUS MZANSI MUSIC: YOUNG URBAN SOUTH AFRICA TRINOVAT 003919 CD

In May this year South Africans celebrated ten years of post-apartheid freedom, but also mourned the deaths in her thirties of Brenda Fassie, among their most popular singers. Fassie was one of the creators of *kwela*, the vibrant party music of young urban South Africa. *Kwela* lyrics are a heady brew of Zulu and township slang drawn on South Africa's 11 official languages. Musically speaking, important House and HipHop mix it up with 1980s township pop styles. Fikeni's colorful guide to the *kwela*

scene is both radio friendly and urgent, and ranges from seven strong HipHop crew Soweto Kaps to billboard-adorned superfunk (and internet car theft) Nardus. There's room for social comment. Brown Dada sings about fathers' rights to see their children, rubbing in the point with the hook of a gurgling baby while the Bangi Muffin pen a pop song about anasthetized woman. The SBF pop give the kids a history lesson by covering "Melodi" by BJs stars Molekoti and The Makotla Queens. Before 1990 all South African record companies were owned by whites. *Kwela* songs, however, were released on the country's first black-owned labels. Maria McGly, who supplied elevenets for this album also runs *we go* cd, a *Wolens* devoted to Johannesburg street culture.

VARIOUS TREASURES OF ALGERIAN MUSIC INSTITUTE DU MONDE ARABE 301045455 CD

The crew for Algerian *Rai* hit Europe in the 1980s as Cheb Khaled and Cheb Mami seized their cheap keyboards and set about modernizing Algerian popular music. But this double CD compilation, a treat! through the archives of Algerian Radio, shows that their powers were fastening to some interesting stuff too. These 3B songs from the 1950s and 60s have an urgent, direct sound, conjuring backbeat cases in Algiers or Paris, or the soundtrack for Albert Camus's misstep youth in Oran. This is popular song in a state of change, infused with local folk styles: Haq Mohammed El Anka, the pioneer of *chaabi*, Bloua Houari and Ahmed Wehby creating *ghazal* in Oran, later to evolve into *rai*; and Slimane Azem singing in Berber dialect for the population of the remote, mountainous Kabylie region. *Ashai* was among several singers who were passionate supporters of the struggle for Algerian independence. The collection ends with Sahara desert songs from the Touareg people, but this is mainly café music, performed with small ensembles of strings, pianos and accordions alternating with traditional instruments.

ASNAOQUEH WERQU ETHIOPIQUES 16: THE LADY WITH THE KRAR BLUDA 823583 CD

Volume 16 of Francis Falato's superb series of "golden age" Ethiopian recordings only rates the singing and *krar* (lute) playing of Asnaoquh Werqu. A famous beauty from the 1950s, she was the first actress ever to appear on stage in Addis Ababa. Her talents included the poetic jostling popular in Ethiopian parties, where a singer would improvise praise of a friend, or a verse on a theme suggested by the host. Her two 1970s albums compiled here consist of lively songs, one a ducking and weaving *lale* accompaniment. Most debt widely with the past of love. For example "Lembi Belbel," about a woman who has fallen for a bewitcher. "Throw a lemon onto her chest, she comes from a good family. Why are her breasts bewitching? Could it be the sharp teeth of her beloved?" □

HipHop

Reviewed by Hua Hsu

CORMEGA LEGAL HUSTLE TAMM RECORDS

Sometimes you just want to hear someone spit, and it is in these moments of weakness that you root for Cormega. The rapper has made a career out of the underground status, first as the prodigal Nas's locked-up buddy in "Dre Love," later as the older, more annotated Nas's favorite: doorman. Bridge blown up, Cormega has had a tough go at solo success, mostly because of his brittle voice and offbeat flow.

The best moments of Legal Hustle sound like they've been lost at sea for about five years. The beats sound old (thankfully, the flow hasn't changed) and the references are limited to the songs between Driza "Good Times" and The Notorious B.I.G.'s "Ready to Die." "WFO" duets off Bronx female funk outfit ESG, adding a true drum stop and a building tension named Dena. Cormega sounds hungry for sties, quoting Biggie and then engaging in one of HipHop's favorite pastimes, that is, rimechanded Rod Stokeland ("You a son like K/J/T/M the one like Rod Stokeland"). Built on the perfect dose of drum crash to Fender Rhodes, "Let It Go" is a master of a song, but the star gets upstaged. The only thing that could possibly eclipse the hype and the main type of MCs: Billy Dano and L.T. Fama is probably an actual explosion, not. Cormega's focused but comparatively dry delivery.

He recovers for "A Beautiful Mind" which functions as a reminder that anyone sounds good over Isaac Hayes. "I must have been an MC in my past life," a heartfelt, war-torn "Weigh" offers, revealing the could-have-been.

FEDERATION HYPHY VEGITA RECORDS

HipHop is the kind of regionalism that works at the level of the neighborhood or block rather than city or coast. Federation is a posse of hard rappers unafraid to harmonize and polysyllable over outlandishly categorical club beats. With its cheap Cokebait synths, warm Cookei Monstertans and punishing, coffee drip beat, hiphop - a state of being best defined by the Federation's hyper-bliss-bliss energy - sounds like a dozen current pop hits at once. The album, due this summer, is interpretation heaven.

The star here is guest E-40, Valley's finest and the inventor of more hiphop valleys than one can possibly imagine. On his chubby guest verse, he crisscross with his whistling, tales about shooting both lilas and letters, "rears arrest with two cups in [his] fist" and complaints of intrusive park rangers.

Lead feckoff man TJ neatly matches E's aplomb, claiming that he "moves like a smoker on blizz on the block" before promoting his own cassette: "Crappy/Straps/Dumb/Shotup/4/Party." TJ also cut his home record - "Let's Chase/Best Coast/Amir/At-your-best Coast" - even though most of his beloved neighbors have no idea what he's talking about.

TALIS KWELI LONELY PEOPLE PROMO 12"

Beatles circa? Between Danger Mouse's Gray Album and Ghostface's sought-after Beatles freestyle, it seems as though the Fab Four are finally getting the respect denied them in Run DMX's "King Of Rock" video. This isolated single probably won't survive sample clearance, as its "Bleat Rhy" strings and Paul McCartney vocal fits are a bit obvious. Kael Double-times it over producer Kanye West's autotune, sparse landscapes, pointing Paul's "All the lonely people" lament toward all the clubbers and lazy materialists ("All safe/never worked with his hands") who are really sad inside. Kael likes the disco as much as the rest of us, but this time out he suffers an existential crisis: "Blink stares like nobody cares/I'm not so exclusive, nobody there/But really, the truth is that nobody there/Cause there's feelings inside that nobody share." Fitgently, he refuses to judge and instead admits his own vanity and concludes, "That's why we need disguise."

MARXEN BLOODY MURDER REACT RECORDS

Brooklynite slugs L.F. Fama and Billy Dano may be on Roc-A-Fella, but the exposure hasn't changed these wh-uh gutturalists one bit. Perhaps this is why the Roc has come to release their latest record, never smooth at all, and this down low idea under the Marxmen name is the sign of a jailbreak. With its drum drops, boomiering baseline and scotch knock, "Bloody Murder" is classic DJ Premier love-fun to reintroduce himself. "That goes for everybody 'thru' it's them/Rod you and you/Ku you and you/Her and her."

"You place your integrity in bags of marijuana/State your names in the bag/And sacrifice honor" Billy rants, reminding us that these streets have codes. All in all it's not quite as raw as one would hope, but the Ja Rule "Mush-mush-mush-mush" sample is pretty fancy.

The B side is a remake of The Geto Boys' anty-thriller, "Mine's Player 'Inks On Me,'" with the guest beat, "I got my nine and two clips on me" sizzling for the chorus.

N'E'R'D SHE WANTS TO MOVE (NATIVE TONGUES REMIX) VEGITA RECORDS

The Notpure's latest wacky album as N'E'R'D was a wisp, disappointing assemblage of perfidit diverse rock and negotiable gaseous spots, but all is forgiven with this much rumored, vaguely historic rework of the lead single. Ditching the original's sex worship, Compton, Max Def Q-Tip and De La Soul ret through with the bells and candles to class the operation up.

After two stony-eyed, would-be transcendental albums, Com bathes back ferociously, ripping chakra heads (or HRs, it's too hard to tell these days) and dropping characteristically headscratching lines like, "You

can be in the game but you need to change teams." Max Def withers and scratches himself into a disturbing larva, while the similarly boyed Q-Tip starts off sounding like a riot trying to sound like Q-Tip as he laments, "Escort your honey dip to the Native Tongue show/She's a abstinent freak and you don't even know." Luckily, Tip gets a couple of good early 1990s pats in there, as well as an early sept-oct pastiche of Justin Timberlake's "Love." De La Soul sound absolutely great. Pos spills over the fast, baler-sh track casually, offering, "Daddy, I want to get in between her like dots in between those letters N-E-R-D." Dope drops Asia, sex bracelets, inanity and the term "honey can't say" before giving way to Pharell's un-announced chorus of, "I housed her/I housed her." One can only hope they aren't all talking about the same women. In other news, industry insiders place Monie Love and Chi-Fu on the upcoming "Ri Di Di" dub mix.

PHARRELL FRONTIN' (DELA JAZZCARET REMIX) MILK CARTER RECORDS

Because of their chart ubiquity, one constantly wonders which hit will be the Notpure's last - attention spans being what they are, it's inevitable that at some point the topping point will be reached and the production duo will seem old or quaint. The engine seemed to decay a little last year, but the summer arrival of Pharell's folkloric debut solo single played any such fears.

The track, plagued by its compact proof and loose binding, has spawned at least three remakes: a bounce dancehall version featuring Wayne Marshall and the impressive Vibe Kartel, a not so good personality from indie head Joe Money and this, a fine-tuned Euro jazz rework from the mysterious Duo, who basically recomposes "Frontin'" as a loose groove, substituting a stretchy languidness for the original's pop tightness. He explains the instrumental, stalling the ways early and letting the over casual drums fall to shade behind. Fidgeting ahead at its own pace, the remix works by submerging Pharell's distracting falsetto and highlighting just how playfully luscious Jay-Z's guest verse actually was. In the background, a recorder (or is it a tape letter?) tries to its own tune as Pharell fruitlessly tries painting the processase forward.

DI P NICE
CELADOR EP
PROMO CD

Celador is the latest homemade EP of "loosey by way of boom beat" from Cambridge prodigy P Nice. The gurgling "Needle Drop" starts off with what seems like a self-indignant mishap and well, needle drops and accidental noise. But it slowly starts arriving itself into a nice makeshift rhythm, pinged off a short syllable phrase and subtle anharmonic drums before dissolving again.

The syllables (again!) and electric keyboards of the meandering "Small Stone Houses" shift

weight carefully, teetering ahead on crisp, fat drums.

The spit here is "Beyond," an intimate gem that swishes through Sanders's fiery classics, "Sum Allin." P Nice brilliantly excerpts the piano strife and brushes, keeping just enough of Sanders's sea season. Upchirps is the Leon Thomas stand-in, serving up the righteous, post-Native Tongue, college educated coeds to Thomas's spare for peace.

THE ROOTS DON'T SAY NUTHIN' GAFER RECORDS 12"

Lurking somewhere between the Knight Rider theme and a 90s-Dr Oke bank of foam form G Funk, the lead single off the new Roots album is a dubious proposition. The Philadelphia neosoulers men have made no secret of their collective ambition to start making music, but one wonders whether this is the way to do it. On one hand, the beat - overman by Scott "Left Jaw" Storch - suggests a closed listening's lacking in much of their previous stuff. This isn't some pounding ballad or reference-heavy, signify! band jam.

Moreover, for his part, Black Thought maintains the concert, leading listeners through the sort of grandiose ensembles that made the last album's standard track "Water" such a departure. "Noddy/Stone of the original gun clasp/Out on the wrong corner/fur/shirt get spun backwards" he raps with acid. But then comes the chorus, the monolith of what you would be hit. You start to understand what he is saying until you realize that he is, quite literally, not saying nuthin. Instead, thought manifests and huffs, mocking the lazy, patchwork rhymes of his more famous peers. It's quite brilliant and meta, but one wonders if the targets of his barbs actually care if he says anything.

SUPERSOUL/DYANVS NICK FURY/JUDAS PAPER CHASE/GET CHA WEIGHT UP MERATONEX RECORDS 12"

Punctuated by grimy snare, sharp guitar lurches and a wistful hair drum, the over impressive producer Supersoul gives rapper Judah Mason the perfect platform for his gutter philosophizing. "Got you under the impression shows gonjas in the trunk," Mason brazenly shows, referring to the track's jimp appeal. Mason goes back and forth between accepting a modest life and chasing paper, admiring all the diamond ice but knowing he's better than it. "I make the money/The money don't make me/I get change for my dollars/The dollars won't change me," he asserts.

On "Get Cha Weight Up," rapper Dyanvs finds himself "up in the house with no exquists," going far as to call out an African American legend, the poet Langston Hughes - "If this was 46/Langston Hughes would have had to pay me more." Like much of the Westside stuff, Nick Fury's beat, all bass, blares and carriage lurches, is equal parts ood and Dirty South. □

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Edwin Pouncey

ACTIVE INGREDIENTS TITRATION

DELMAR CD/CD 02

Active ingredients are drummer Dave Taylor, who plays Jimmy Morales' bass player Tom Abate and trombonist Steve Swell who, alongside concert player Rob Maunack, tenor saxophonist David Boykin and percussionist Anselmo Jr., produce an AACM styled free jazz big band sound that borrows booms and blasts, before pulling back into some dark corner to smoky ambient an Afrocentric funeral dirge. Toward a full of such changing moods, together with powerful and lyrical soloists and strong combined performances from all seven equally balanced players.

MATT BAUDER & JASON AJEMIAN

OBJECTS

LOUDEST LINE CD

Saxophonist Matt Bauder has worked with Allen Lucier, Anthony Braxton and Neil Hume, while bass player Jason Ajemian has played in groups such as Truog, Dragons 1976 and Ken Vandermark's Dues Ensemble. Together they sound perfectly matched and phased, setting up a minimalist jazz drone, with Bauder's sustained saxophone playing hovering in the air over Ajemian's slowly bowed bass, which at times sounds like a landslide. As the session progresses, their playing becomes more defined, the drones unraveling new trends of musical exploration that flow together one minute only to disintegrate the next. This attention to detail gives the duo's music its inner strength.

SAMM BENNETT SECRETS OF TEACHING YOURSELF MUSIC

IMPROVED MUSIC FROM AFRICA MUSIC CD

Drummer, percussionist and electronic producer Sam Bennett gathers together a diverse collection of analogue synths, electronic drums, beepers, toys and a portable karaoke microphone to piece together this amusing and entertaining DIY musical prism. Recorded at four Tokyo venues from August 2003 to January 2004, Bennett's lively manipulation of sound never fails to uncover some new means of mechanical communication between the objects he has assembled. His choice of rhythms and styles is as mixed as his orchestration, with various electronics drifting into muted robotic techno dance grooves. Just as it becomes irritating, it collapses into a burst of backward voice sampling overlaid with a metallic pop effect. This hands on approach to making music is certainly enjoyable, although it's hard not to compare this with the more ingenious improvised musical bedevils produced of Alasdair Willis and Vinnai B12.

JOHN BENNETT SMITHY

CD 02 01017 CD

As its title indicates, the recording location for these three solo guitar improvisations by John Bennett was Lake Uster's Smithy in Stockport. For

his musical inspiration, Bennett returns to a well thumbed copy of his father's Scottish Students' Songbook, the source giving the session a very autumnal feel (although not intended). A lingering sense that simply by listening, one is somehow intruding on the guitarist's private meditations. Together with the field recording notes of crackling embers and passing traffic, Bennett's ambient playing style could easily be compared to that of Lorin Conners. Here, however, there's a focus and vibrancy that elevates Smithy into something more personified and precious.

CURLEW GUSSIE

ROCKMARTHO BROS/NOISE LP

Recorded on 10 July 2004 at Gus Lucky's Gallery in Minneapolis as part of a series of concerts, improvisational quartet Curlew sound in top form as they scrape, scratch, trill and blow their way through a set bulging with surprises and thrilling moments. The title track is a delightful swirl of strange sounds and awkwardly angled arrangements, with all concerned contributing some astonishing ideas. This comes on during the remaining tracks, especially on the extended "Lorraine's Curve", where electric guitarist Davey Williams and saxophonist George Corbitt, who is an acoustic prelude that acts as a call for the rest of the group to become increasingly animated. Chris Parker's piano sounds as though he is playing it in an adjoining room, while bass player Fred Chaffner and percussionist Bruce Golden add to the chaos as electric sparks begin to fly. Which is what you will have to do if you want to hear this, as only 435 copies (with hand-drawn covers by Anne Elise) were pressed.

ARTHUR DOYLE & HAMID DRAKE

YOUR SPIRIT IS CALLING

ORICO/DECCA CD

The bringin' together of cult free jazz performer Arthur Doyle and respected young tenor Hamid Drake is a concept that reads better than it sounds. Doyle's last great recorded blast was his Alabama Reeling album for Charles Tyler's A&B label in 1977, a record so powerful that it seems he never really recovered from the exertion that was poured into the session. Subsequent Doyle releases have seen that initial playing force slowly diminish, and this latest effort for Italian label Orico is able to throw a dousing can of a bucket of water. Doyle plays piano, flutes, recorder and tenor sax (all badly, which he supplements with a vocal that is mostly bubble. The real frustration here, though, is that drummer Drake sounds somewhat troubled as he unconvincingly circles around Doyle's eccentric scuzzings instead of just letting go on his let. A lost opportunity.

JAF GILSON & "MALAGASY"

ZAO

Zao is the result of an encounter between French jazz producer, musician and influential Palm label founder Jaf Gilson and a group of

young jazz musicians he met in Tennessee while touring Madagascar in 1968. Gilson was so impressed that he returned twice in 1969 with cellist and bassist Jean Charles Capon to try and capture what he had heard. Recorded on a single Revox with two Neumann microphones, the aged group to perform – with him playing balalaika – as some of his own compositions. He also managed to coax a stunning version of Pharoah Sanders' "The Creator Has A Master Plan" from 20-year old tenor saxophonist Serge Rahonson. The track is especially impressive given that the original version had only just been released in the US at the time of this recording. This seamless joining together of jazz and World Music is a breathtaking and joyful event that resonates as brightly now as the day it was recorded.

NOAH HOWARD LIVE AT THE VILLAGE

VANGUARD

IRON MAN/ANALOG CD

Captured here playing live at New York's Village Vanguard on 22 August 1972, sax legend Noah Howard is joined on these long tracks by a group that includes former John Coltrane drummer Rashied Ali and the late tenor sax player Frank Lowe. The saxophonist made a perfect team, Howard simply wringing the notes from his horn while Lowe adds into a burst of free blowing howl and squeal that reminds of the first passages on his Black Hawk album for ESP-Disco. Elsewhere, Ali and congo drummer Jama Sultan keep the percussive heat simmering and the entire set erupts with Howard's "Dedication To Albert Ayler", a volcanic tribute where the spirit of the (then) recently departed Ayler is summoned up through the twin sax workout and urged to join in. Even the steadily damaged cover of this issue can't detract from the creative ecstasy and power of this once rare recording.

KALAPARUSH AND THE LIGHT MORNING SONG

DELMAR CD/CD 02

Kalaparush Maurice McIntyre was one of the driving forces behind Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians during the mid-60s, an organisation that ultimately became the nucleus for that city's free jazz scene. With this new record from the elder AACM statesman that noble tradition lives on, albeit with Kalaparush now joined by two musicians who weren't even born when he was making his mark. Not that one would detect anything was amiss as both buba player Jesse Dorman and drummer Raviah Mann sound perfectly in tune with McIntyre's timeless tenor sax playing, which veers from the Coltranean blues mood of "I Don't Have An Answer Unless It's God" to the more experimental "Symphony No. 1".

CHARLES LLOYD & BILLY HIGGINS

WHICH WAY IS EAST

CD 02 10705 CD

Veteran saxophone player Charles Lloyd and the late Billy Higgins, formerly Donella Coleman's

drummer, team up for an extended session where they pull out Higgins' ethnic musical instrument collection from his bedroom to record a madcap mix of jazz, blues and World Music. Is an attempt to get to the traditional core of the music with which both players are so involved, they almost go into a trance-like state with Lloyd solemnly singing African tribal songs while Higgins responds with synthetic drum beats. Although those interludes are heartfelt and interesting, the duo are at their peak when they are playing what they really knew best: Lloyd's melodious sax flourishes are the perfect foil for Higgins to wrap his laidback drumming style around, and the warmth that his wild listening to them snap around each other on "Manhattan's Dance" is well worth waiting for.

WOLFGANG MITTERER RADIO FRACAL/BEAT MUSIC

HANOLOGY 2005 30CD

An explosive electronic computer track which bursts out of the speakers like some rediscovered chunk of avant architecture by James Tenor. Recorded live at Donaueschingen 2002, Wolfgang Mitterer's prepared electronics are supplemented by a group comprising a further two electronic musicians, saxophone, guitar and drums. Also on board is minimalist death3, whose contribution to the sprawling web of concrete sounds amplifies the strange magnitude of the project. The eleven tracks refer to Georges Bataille, an author whose work dwelt on the darker aspects of the human condition. Similarly Mitterer's fascinating work overflows the realm of modern composition, pop and jazz to reveal a new music that is as shocking, disturbing and exciting as Bataille's Eroticism.

SUN RA SUN RA RESEARCH

SUN RA RESEARCH SPM/CD 02

The first of a projected series of fascinating Sun Ra interview CDs, conducted and compiled by John and Peter Hirsch, timeless exponents of Sun Ra's research message. This initial volume from their sound archives comprises material they collected while following Sun Ra and his Arkestra around California during the mid-60s and early 90s. In between sets, his opened up his soul to their tape recorder and let loose his cosmic philosophy. Here he talks about his musical beginnings with band leader Fletcher Henderson, his belief that angels have been on the earth's surface of Africa and that everybody who looks up the world should be given an election notice to quit the planet. Best of all are his plans to replace disintegrating Arkestra members with white teenagers sporting "wild haircuts that look like they're from outer space" whom he would teach how to sing and dance. There's also music amid the mysterious messaging, including a killer blast from tenor sax player John Gilmore that leaves the bannoon crowd howling like wolves. The interviews themselves (complete with enthusiastic asides from the Hirsch brothers) also possess a certain musicality as Ra's gentle, rhythmic, seductive voice pulls the listener deeper into the universe he created. □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Jim Haynes

MITCHELL AKIYAMA IF NIGHT IS A WEED AND DAY GROWS LESS

Sub Rosa, 1998, CD

I had never come across the term 'idyllic' before David Slobin used it in his review of Fernand's *Velour* (The Wire 243). If anything, defines such an electronics mini-genre. Mitchell Akiyama's *If Night Is A Weed And Day Grows Less* fits the bill. Retaining the overall pleasant demeanor that characterised his earlier, slightly dubby post-rock excursions, Akiyama taps into his classical training as a concerto pianist and offers a suitably elegant set of quiet piano compositions, which he has swathed with the all too familiar coating of kickering DSP effects. The craftsmanship behind this record is unquestionably solid, but it communicates little more than a highly aestheticised lifestyle choice that's as interchangeable and disposable as modular kumtzu.

WILLIAM BASINSKI & RICHARD CHARTIER S/T

SFXK KINGS CD

Both William Basinski and Richard Chartier have been digging through their archival material as of late. In fact, the majority of Basinski's recent output is the result of his discoveries, including his profound Disintegration Loops series. Chartier, meanwhile, based his recent production *Archives 1991* upon two older pieces evolved into a single minded composition of subtle disquiet. When the two began working on this eponymous collaboration, again they delved into the results for inspiration and revelation material.

The first of the two lengthy tracks contains elements by Chartier dating back to 1991-1992, mixed with sympathetic Basinski material that he had been composing for James Blake. Here slowly evolving black drones give way to similarly constructed forms, sprinkled with low impact fluttering effects. Where the first track serves a static uniformity through its subtle shiftings, the second flickers and quivers with a comparatively greater gain for the dramatic, thanks to their reworking of Basinski's tape loops, which inject a cyclical movement to the ghostly ambience lying below. Within these filigree ways of sound, Basinski's pathos laden sonorities match perfectly with Chartier's spartan reduction. Hopefully their marriage of unique voices will continue into the future.

CHEAPMACHINES LAMINA

HOME MADE AUDIO RECORDINGS PROMO CD-R

KARINA ESP RADIUS OF SOUND

HOME MADE AUDIO RECORDINGS PROMO CD-R

At least with CD-R labels like Celebrate St-Cri, Rural Electrification Program and Pseudoarcana, the label names themselves can impart metaphoric and metaphysical properties to the live productions that such cottage industries produce. Home-Made Audio Recordings eschew any delusions of grandeur with their no frills

nomenclature and no nonsense packaging (blank coloured paper, xeroxed information and CD-R pressings), emanating a desire despite the music itself speak for itself.

Karina ESP's *Radius Of Sound* holds its own fairly well, presenting three pieces of guitar based drone-scaping. Karina ESP's sets is slow motion a series of total drifts into mental suspended guitar resonance and carefully controlled amplifier feedback, resulting in a barren and vaguely hostile environment. At the same time, the perpetual absence of delay patterns and muffled sound quality tend to distract from Karina ESP's attempts at dark ambient synthesis.

Production values greatly increase on Cheapmachines' *Lamina* with each aptly named quaking with explosive potential. The opening series of distant, too little whistles and complex feedback patterns tread into sawtooth waves and granular chunks of all sound gear. But for whatever reason, about a third of the way into the disc, Cheapmachines detour through an ungainly cluster of fast-piano notes on a low rent synth. While the obvious rationale is that the cheapness of those sounds is an act of self-reflection, the compositional strategies to arrange such sounds are ultimately confused.

HECKER PY TRECKS

KOLNISCHE KUNSTWERKEHCD CD

Maya associate Florian Hecker (not to be confused with Canadian Tim Hecker) sets his work within the context of historical revisionism, looking back to the early developments of computer music through the lens of contemporary DSP techniques, software and systems. In many ways, *Py Trecks* is an attempt to recreate the experiments that might have been had as such pioneering institutions as the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center album reads as a semiotic caesura, presenting slight variations of May/MSP patterns, granularly deconstructed samples and fragments. Occasionally ecstatic in its wild dopping across the sampler's binary codes, *Py Trecks* emerges more as a demonstration of how computer synthesis has empowered over the past half century than what to say with these tools.

JASON KAHN MIRAMIR

SIRI RECORDS SIR0016 CD

Like few avant garde, non-percussive drummers like Günter Müller and Eddie Prevost, Jason Kahn needs to have the physical presence of a drumkit even if he never strikes it in a traditional means. For Miramar, Kahn devised a feedback system which ran unwavering snarrows from an analogue synthesizer through the resonant chamber of his floor tom and back through the synthesizer to close the loop, so as to create multiple harmonic layers in the original tones.

In turn, he recorded the system through eight microphones strategically placed throughout the room. Each of them captured a slightly different collection of frequencies and vibrations,

providing Kahn with a finely tuned palette of monochromatic sounds. Miramar, which Kahn tracked only through equalisation and phasing between the multi-channel recordings, is a marvelous exercise in holy minimalism on a par with the work of Charlemagne Palestine and Elase Radigue.

KONTAKT DER JÜNGLINGE FRÜHRUN

DIE STADT D089 VCD

The final recording in the series of Kontakt Der Jünglinge collaborations between Aarnus Tietheers and Thomas Körner is a 3" CD that comes housed in an oversized box designed to fit the previous four CDs snugly inside. Had this been offered with a sensible pricing structure, it would have made a fine conclusion to the series. Instead its hefty price tag limits the box to KDI completists.

So, *Frührun* is something you either need to have, or you don't. The commodification of the box set as a fetish object effectively negates whatever Tietheers and Körner may have to say. It is an unfortunate consequence, given that the brief 15 minutes of gapping noises are immaculate Tietheers's electronic algorithms whirled with cool precision in the background while Körner casts flicking motifs in an industrialist aesthetic. It should also be mentioned that Die Stadt is selling the whole series as complete package for those who missed out the first time around.

ROSY PARLANE IRIS

TOUCH T046 CD

Jon Weizenroth's impeccable photography and design packages Rosy Parlane's Iris inside a predominantly black package, meticulously leaving the reader to the professional's narrative of the colour. If this has more to do with the power of suggestion of the Touch branding campaign, Parlane's audio impression is certainly nothing to scoff at. He fluties his soundscapes with cascades of digital fragments, which he separates into two distinct compositional categories. On the one hand, Parlane stretches sounds from guitar, piano and organ into unrecognisable drones that swell into dense layerings, every once in a while coalescing into fluttering half-whistles. On the other, he emphasises the textural qualities of these digital fragments, simulating the natural acoustics of low crackling from trees in winter or the gentle patter of rain on a window sill. When listening those gestures by placing the textures against the backdrop of the drone, Parlane effectively builds gleaming sound environments with a profoundly human melancholia.

GENESIS P-ORRIDGE & ASTRID MONROE WHEN I WAS YOUNG

WITCHAMINT RECORDINGS CD

Perhaps the (now postponed) reunion proper of Throbbing Utopia for one final transmission will reject a spark into Genesis P-Orridge's dreadful scraps of a solo career. Psychic TV hadn't

released a listenable album in years, as Genesis would simply fire on a TOPY acolyte to do his bidding with complete deference to Tree Mussy. When I Was Young is no different. Astrid Monroe (the top secret pseudonym for the producer of the album) is all too quick to be done with this piece of work, offering little more than cheap, factory pre-sets on a drum machine set to 'triplo mode' and a faux-thrasher wailer on a couple of tracks to give it that 'authentic' Porthead feel. P-Orridge doesn't even offer much in the way of new lyrics, as he recycles much of the same spoken word pebble found on PTV's *Times Up*.

TARAB SURFACEDRIFT

MAULSTREIP NG0001 CD

Surfacedrift is the impressive debut album for Melbourne's Eamon Speed, who has adopted the moniker Tarab for his explorations of field recordings couched with found object improvisation. Each of the four lengthy tracks traps out a psychogeography through sound, specifying the intimate details of these environments and accentuating the pre-existing natural elements with sympathetic textures provided by Speed. Most of the time, his hand (which can be heard rattling leaves or dragging objects through gravel) is perfectly attuned to the natural settings, so as to render his own scribbles almost indistinguishable from his recordings of wind, violently creaking door hinges, waves lapping at coastal boulders and rainwater spewing out of a clogged gutter. Where the boundaries between what is natural and performance are blurred on *Surfacedrift*, Speed's compositional wandering through his complex spaces recalls the intuitive collaging of material found in Francesco Lúcia's *Re La Selva* and Chris Watson's *Weather Report*.

TOSHIBA TSUNODA KAPOTTA MUZIEK BY TOSHIBA TSUNODA

KORVM PLASTICS KP0014 CD

Japanese field recording specialist Toshiba Tsunoda is the latest composer to receive an invitation to work the oceans of Kapotta Muziek, one of my ongoing projects for the ever prolific Frans De Waard. Through Kapotta Muziek, De Waard has presented a dynamic form of electroacoustic techniques in recycling sounds from discarded objects, second hand music and other forms of cultural detritus. Thus, the Kapotta Muziek By... series is a logical extension of De Waard's own recycling programme, in handing over his own recordings to selected composers for them to reinterpret. By all appearances, Tsunoda took the Kapotta Muziek cassette Vibe Stalder to Nagasaki Bay in Hakasaki City, Japan and played back the Kapotta Muziek sounds within that environment. Yet Tsunoda's strategies in the placement of the microphone within a bottle or the cassette player against a resonating metal pipe, the slightly modulate both the environmental sounds and the Kapotta Muziek tracks to arrive at a bustling abstraction of crackle, hiss, and vibration. □

Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Suspicious mind: Derek Bailey

DEREK BAILEY AND THE STORY OF FREE IMPROVISATION BEN WATSON VENO HBK £20 BY MATT PITCHER

If Donald Dugme film maker Lars Von Trier had wanted to set Ben Watson free, obstructions, he might have considered the task of writing a biography of Derek Bailey and free improvisation. For starters, there's the resistance of free improvisers generally to entrapment in critical concepts, as well as historical narratives. Then there's the widespread mistrust of journalists, as well as public disagreements over the nature of the music. On top of Bailey's commitment to keeping the imagination "unencumbered by forward planning or systematic devices", he finds most terminology "not free improvisation – ludicrous. And thus there's the difficulty of building a book around a figurehead in a field that eschews heroes and hierarchies. The complete loss of Bailey's *Invisible Jukebox* in the Wire 178, printed as an appendix here, is an extraordinary essay in cross purposes.

The book opens with a characteristically sweeping affirmation, which sets Bailey's genius within a vortex of social and artistic dissonance, exploding outwardly from Kurt Schwitters and Edgard Varèse. But what emerges is something more restrained and mundane. Compared with Watson's ebullient time on Frank Zappa, this is less an agglomeration of rapid drinkable associations, more a studied peering together of insights and misadventures from the mouths of

various protagonists. To this end, the first third is organised around an extensive dialogue with Bailey, often transcribed in his own words, taking as from his working class upbringing in Sheffield, and through an exciting period of jazz band apprenticeship – a quartet in France, a 12 piece in Glasgow, and so on in rapid succession through dancehalls in the 50s and cabarets in the 60s. At one point Bailey was holding down work simultaneously in a nightclub, radio orchestra and TV show in London, Manchester and Blackpool.

The pivotal scene is the mid-80s convergence of Bailey with drummer Roy Caye and composer Gavin Bryars in *The Joseph Holbrooke Trio*. This is where the move towards a more ardent commitment to abstraction and contingency developed in the playing – a product partly of their fortuitous isolation in Sheffield. Bryars's dissemination of John Cage and Bailey's own fascination with Aron Weinberg were as much a catalyst as the group's responses to pianist Bill Evans and bass player Scott LaFaro. Watson's complex historical learnings are instructive here. For almost as soon as the possibility of free improvisation emerges, its components start to veer in different directions.

In a way, the rest of the book is about the constant splittings and delimitations of "free" improvisation among its various interpreters, with Bailey seemingly always left holding the more ardent ground. Thus the same keynote that witnessed the birth of the Spontaneous Music Ensemble and performances at the Little Theatre in Covent Garden, also found Jamie Muir (the "art school experimentalist" and Terriak Buddhist)

joining Music Improvisation Company (MIC) to join King Crimson; Bailey's arguments with Stevens over the relationship with jazz; his estrangement from saxophonist Evan Parker, and so on.

To his credit Watson doesn't mine the period for polemics and conflicts but predominantly as a way of locating Bailey's practice. To this end, more than 100 pages chart the development of Company Week, the yearly improv congress held originally at the ICA and overseen by Bailey from 1977-84, which proved a touchstone for the music's eclectic contact with modern composition, jazz, dance and happenings. With multiple commemorations from Bryars, Caye and younger exponents such as Eugene Chadbourne, no single viewpoint comes to the fore. Bailey himself at times adopts the dignified shrug eyes Charlie Appinyard, while Watson appears sometimes as polemicist, sometimes as patronised interviewee – "he evidently suspects his younger biographer" – sometimes as reviewer for *The Wire* and *Hi-Fi News*.

This diversification of impressions may be partly a strategic way of circumventing Bailey's own outlook. But if so, it's a strategy Bailey himself also adopts. No one wishes to amigrate free improvisation to its own voice – or even to something as intentional as a "voice" – not even Watson. My favourite contrary moment is a flashback to a teenage Watson's encounter with an American student who teaches the original *Corcoran Week* in 1977 and tries to turn Watson on to the music. Watson, who is listening to Wishbone Ash and Little Feet, is unimpressed, finding it cerebral and arty. It's a revealing

moment, because a final and intriguing hindrance is that Watson would, more than anything, like to be able to say that Bailey "swings", to assimilate him to the same kind of sexual violation he more easily locates in Frank Zappa and Johnny "Guitar" Watson. A "Webern that rocks" is one characterisation of a late 1950s release, and one senses the relief with, with Bailey and John Zorn, Watson is able to find a take on rhythm that brands "Free improvisation as jazz-based and Afro-centric rather than harmony-based and European". But the gallant everywhere resists this move, and Watson is forced, admirably, to settle not for swing but for contingency and absurdity.

Behind it lies Bailey's well-documented antipathy towards jazz. "To mention the word jazz to Bailey is to step into a minefield" Watson considers, "Just as, to emerge as a definitive writer, Samuel Beckett needed to shake off the Irish parody of James Joyce, Bailey needed to shake off the waffle and quake of blues and jazz." As well as emitting electric chords that burst like shells in a moonless sky, his instrument can be "as cold as a surgeon's scalpel".

But Joyce is Watson's bedside bible. Perhaps this is why, in the same period that saw the genesis of this book, Watson it slipped its noose to play truant in his art-punk pornographic novel, *Shitbooks And Doughballs*, leaving a more urbane biographer to face the father of *Impure Whispers* the psychic scots, this is a timely history of an extraordinary and revolutionary musician, brimming with anecdote and insight, without ceasing to be a conundrum. □

SONIC ALCHEMY: VISIONARY MUSIC PRODUCERS AND THEIR MAVERICK RECORDINGS

DAVID N HOWARD

HAL LEONARD PEEK \$19.95

BY ROB YOUNG

This book is long overdue. Sonic Alchemy maps out the altering nature of the producer from the 1960s onwards, from being the guy in the tie who switched the red button on and off, to the 'musick' who could have as much artistic input in his own right as the artists themselves — and in fact how such intervention could be necessary in the face of young, inexperienced or stoned group members who turned out to be clueless in the booth. Beginning in the mid-60s, and dealing with two or three producers per chapter, its searchlight sweeps over figures such as David Axelrod, Brian Wilson, Jimmy Miller, Norman Whitfield, Brian Eno, John Cale, Ringo Starr, and Lee Perry, Marianne Harrell, Rod, Steve Allen, right up to 'Beats' Seemster, Arthur Baker, Bomb Squad and Dr Dre.

The publication of such a book should afford the opportunity to clarify the distinction between a producer and an engineer, two separate roles that are so often conjoined interchangeably. It should also untangle the problematic situation of the producer as man in the middle between artist and

the record company/studio/distro/label firm, and attempt to explain why these are so few women in the control room. Said to say, Sonic Alchemy fails to address these issues and is let down by lack of detailed analysis and a rushed style.

The book could therefore have been a fine achievement but its limitations strike soon into the first chapter, a parallel account of the careers of George Martin and Phil Spector. This chapter is blatant hackwork, retelling the Martin and Spector stories, already familiar from Beatles chronicles like Ian MacDonald. In short-hand, Major Innovation points and decisions taken are described as if observed from behind a central booth window, with little real insight into the producer's role. In fact the most interesting stuff over which Martin presided — the experimental aspects of The Beatles' White Album, for example — are omitted entirely, apart from a reprise of the tape-out of Sgt Pepper's. And Howard reaches the most banal of conclusions about Martin and Spector, 'their radically different methods of achieving their results illuminate the fact that so two production approaches are clearly the same.' Ooh. And so it goes on, through chapters covering the California Sunshine Sound of Brian Wilson, Terry Melcher, Gary Usher and Curt Boettcher, Usher's Sagittarius and Boettcher's The

Millennium were two 'fictional' groups' invented around music they had whipped up with session men. These don't often surface in rock history, but the space afforded these quickly dated records is curious given that 'Good Vibrations', one of the pop production miracles of the 1960s, is tossed off in a couple of perfunctory paragraphs.

Careers are summarised with a competence that wears on going through the mobsters: Jimmy Miller's and Glyn Johns' work with The Rolling Stones, soul producers Willie Mitchell and Norman Whitfield's respective transformations of Al Green and the Mellow Redd, and the new and the old of Sam Elman as producer of The Kinks and The Who. Jimmy Brown recording drum sets closely with 12 mics instead of the customary four. It may sound nerdy, but this is the kind of detail you want to find in a book focused on the producer. But that level of tangible detail remains frustratingly out of reach for most of the 300-odd pages.

Howard is a former managing editor of the indie Ultimate Band (UB), so it's perhaps no surprise that so much of the prose has a telegraphed feel, with at least one adjective adorning to tell about every name and noun you come across — a 'he' which seems to tug like torture by dripping tape. This is a world in which producers are always 'at the helm' of a new album, where success can be measured and

vindicated by chart success or enduring high sales (George Martin's role as founder of Monument Studios — site of some of some of the 80s' 'pulsant' excesses — and as producer of Elton John's royal waltz cash-in, 'Candle In The Wind', appear to be viewed as a boon here), and reported arguments between artists and 'helmsmen' are mysteriously resolved with no explanation of the process by which frictions were sorted out. The book, which contains no new interview material, could have done with deeper meditation on the actual activity of the producer. Too often Howard relies on breathless, ported vignettes of a group's career, as if those familiar landmarks are enough to vindicate and explain the producer's role in the process.

Howard makes the expected plea for indulgence in his intro, begging forgiveness for leaving out certain individuals. But the reader has every right to expect, in a book that claims to be a 'sweet history of the music producer', to find the inclusion of (left to top of my head) Joe Meek, Sam Phillips, Joe Meeks, Jas Heinemann, Rudy Van Gelder, Bob Thiele and Michael Ocasio, Helmut Chasky, John Lader, Martin Sza, Joe Bova, Conny Plank, Nigel Godrich, Tim Fries-Greene, George Clinton, Prince, Giorgio Moroder, Trevor Horn... Some Alchemy is certainly a tale that needs telling, but not in such leader-lashie. □

STAND AND DELIVER: POLITICAL ACTIVISM, LEADERSHIP AND HIP HOP CULTURE

YVONNE BYNOE
SCOT BOKAL PRESS \$19.95

BY DAVID BISHOP

It's an uncomfortable fact that, while HipHop has become arguably the new pop lingua franca, the prime genre on MTV and a multi-billion dollar industry, for all its ingenuity and enthusiasm, it has not in any way improved the social lot of African-Americans, who remain stubbornly mired in poverty, disenfranchisement and disadvantage. What's more, you suspect that society's support of the way that many HipHop artists, superstars, 'Hiphopness' and consumes like it. The disposition of the gangsta life serves to add a necessary kissin and authenticity to their musical exploits, the Durkheimian triumph of the filthiest and the baddest

pouncing lyrical scorn on the suckers beneath them, flaunting their spoils with unfettered, capitalist glee. Programmes of agitprop are nowhere on the agenda — or, at least not on the HipHop menu presented to us by MTV or the major labels.

Cultural critic and political activist Yvonne Byrd attempts (eventually) to face down this dichotomy, trying to seek out ways in which African-Americans can at least assume power and civic self-determination and what role, if any, HipHop might play in this long-delayed process. Initially her book raises questions: Byrd's dedication to God 'The Creator' might seem odd to those among those who assume agnosticism to be the minimum requirement of an inquiring mind. Furthermore, it becomes clear that HipHop does not play as starring a role in the text as the title leads you to believe. For pages, indeed entire chapters, the subject remains offstage. This, you realise, is a series of essays,

occasionally rendered with needlessly longwinded academic solemnity but mostly highly readable, that amount to a history of the African-American power struggle. The book includes interviews with contemporary civic practitioners and noted biographies of the NAACP and the Black Panthers, including retrospectives of their programmes and demands.

However, where Byrd does engage with HipHop, she does so with great pertinency and insight. She was enough of the broader picture to catch the notion of HipHop politics as a means of engaging young people, explaining that a more complex solution is required than issues being expounded and mediated by well-meaning nappers — that black America no more needs HipHop politicians than it does HipHop doctors. Sympathetically relating the concerns of HipHop critics like Conrad Muhammad and Spike Lee who regard HipHop as steeped in materialism and as a new form of 'materialism',

she is poised to observe that the contemporary African-American generation are more conservative and acquisitive than their parents. However, she argues that there is a strain of 'social' HipHop, as practised by the likes of Mos Def, which is disavowed by the media. She also believes that the civil rights generation issued a track in the early 90s by not extending more of a hand to HipHop activists like Chuck D and KRS-One, regarding HipHop as a passing fad. She believes that any new political movement would 'have to build a viable political apparatus that incorporates the cultural expression of HipHop'. She suggests as a model the relationship between the Black Power movement and the Black Arts Movement. While nobody should 'hold their breath in anticipation of this occurring any time soon, Byrd has at least attempted to build a bridge here, where before there has only been denial and mutual contempt. □



"Blissfulness of purpose" or "integrity of rupture"? John Coltrane (left); Charles Mingus

FREEDOM IS, FREEDOM AIN'T SCOTT SAUL

BERNARD UNIVERSITY PRESS \$28.95

BY PHILIP CLARK

Scott Saul's subject is the explosion of redoubtable jazz in the 1950s and 1960s, driven by an engagement with the Black Power movement and the anti-suburban hipster counterculture. The principal musicians he explores are figures like Charles Mingus, John Coltrane and Max Roach, but he backs the biographical norm by placing the music within the wider intellectual milieu of writers, critics and visual artists that instinctively felt the urgency of jazz, even if some responded in a well-worn way.

Saul is assistant professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley, and uses his interdisciplinary expertise to demonstrate how social factors fed the harmonic and structural innovations he illustrates through weighty passages of musical analysis. The book pivots around Mingus' "outrageous, joyful, difficult, militant" and "magical" tendencies and Coltrane's "singleness of purpose that refused the kinds of masquerades, the overt mixing of genres, that animated Mingus's work." Mingus's warrenty raggedy and brutalised structures – the "integrity of rupture" – trumped over seamless structures in the desire to incorporate radical impulses conceived in the moment. Coltrane's preference for bassist Jimmy Garrison's drones, McCoy

Tyner's terse piano vamps and drummer Elvin Jones's methodical carpeting demonstrated an opposing predisposition for flattening out ideas and syntax to create a continuum that the asynchronised could then exploit "to act freely while his environment convulsed around him." Mingus provoked his audiences by questioning their motives for being in jazz clubs. Coltrane attempted telepathic communication, turning concerts into a mutual experience. He grabbed jazz back from Tin Pan Alley forms by stripping it back to basics and "unearthing old roots even as he built his own new forms", whereas Mingus embedded harmonic uncertainties into standards, and re-radicalised gospel and blues. And finally Saul identifies a paradox – for all Mingus's grandstanding political statements, it was Coltrane who was taken up by the Civil Rights movement as a folk hero.

If Saul had considered musicians as important as Ornette Coleman, Thelonious Monk and Eric Dolphy, he might have painted a broader picture, but his examination of Mingus and Coltrane so encapsulates the creative tensions of the era that the book isn't weakened by their exclusion. Besides, he wants to examine the wider cultural picture, and his discussion of Coltrane's tropical years exposes the racial fallacies that rested within the critical community. While Leonard Feather, from the largely white critical fraternity of Downbeat, termed Coltrane "anti-jazz" and heard "a hintless anxiety", the black

writer Artin Barska was hearing "something earthshaking" and "a black consciousness so in touch with itself that it could begin to transcend its pain". The warts-and-all vocal quality of Coltrane's sound – the "yowls" and "howls" that so disturbed a writer like Ira Gitler – was rightly contextualised by Barska as a "fresh instrumental perspective on the 'blues cry' that 'disputed with the conventional harmonic narrative of the blues'".

That radical black writers were more in tune with radical black music is hardly a strikingly original point, but Saul has already prepared his ground by exploring how white writers and hangers-on exploited jazz to make cultural hay. When Norman Mailer's notorious "White Negro" essay (1954) encouraged emurgence against white middle class conformity by demanding radical thinkers should find the "psychopath within themselves", these psychopathic tendencies equalled the worst racial stereotypes of macho sexual behaviour. The black jazz establishment was horrified when white middle class kids noted at Newport Jazz Festival in 1960, and James Baldwin was one of many black writers who lambasted Mailer's racial assumptions. For Baldwin a renewal could occur only through the integration of hipster ideology into society. Like Mingus, Baldwin was an experimenter rooted in tradition.

Saul concludes that freedom is free thinking rooted in the discipline of community and

freedom ain't license for the sort of anarchy demonstrated by the Newport rioters, egged on, he thinks, by the rampant feigned commensuration that Newport had come to represent. He traces hipster tendencies back to Cab Calloway and Slim Gaillard's development of jive to highlight their individuality within white dominated society, noting how their idealism was deflated by the media into the latest "must-have" craze for drooping out.

Meanwhile Saul uncovers a parallel phenomenon in white artists whose consciences were ignited by their commitment to black causes. Playwright Sam Shepard and poet John Sinclair rose to the challenges posed by Mingus and Coltrane respectively. In Sinclair's mind, Saul claims, "free jazz not only started that art imitated life bit... forced you to measure yourself by the stepsman standards of the music; to reconsider who you might be." Sinclair eventually managed Detroit's MCS, pushing them towards the aesthetics of noise, and formed the White Panther movement, which espoused a doctrine of "depe, rock 'n' roll and ludding in the streets". Saul makes the subtle distinction between Mingus and Martin Luther King's ideal of freedom governed by higher laws and Sinclair's freedom from authority and the grimly of supply and demand. Tension between individualism and the safety net of mass culture is the prevailing theme of this original and thought-provoking piece of writing. □

SONATA FOR JUKEBOX: POP MUSIC, MEMORY AND THE IMAGINED LIFE

GEOFFREY BROWN
COURTESY POINT HIK \$29.95

By ALAN LICHT

While *Sonata For Jukebox* might sound like an eremitic turnabout composition by the likes of Christian Marclay or Rie Muskat, in fact it's a fitting title for this essay collection and memoir, a worthy addition to Geoffrey Brown's previous book-length meditations on reading (*The Brewer's Goblet*) and cinema (*The Phantom Empire*). O'Brien is a poet and cultural critic who has waxed eloquent on everything from Oulipo to Las Vegas to Sonfield to Bing Crosby. Here he exercises his expertise as popular scribe in the last seven decades. He posits pop songs as markers of personal history, and records as objects with the ability to freeze time—but which exist in a riftworld between actual-believe and real-life. "The age of recording," he writes, "is necessarily an age of nostalgia—when was the past so hauntingly accessible?—but to that extent might be the incapacity of even the most perfectly captured sound to restore the moment of its first inscribing. That world is no longer there. On

closer listening, it probably never was, for longer than the instant during which unfamiliar music would open spaces equally and decisively unfamiliar."

As it happens, O'Brien comes from a musical family. His grandfather had a smalltown dance band, his father was a popular New York radio host and DJ, his brother an aspiring musician. Music weaves in and out of his family history, which he goes into in some detail here, and he also makes the parallel between his family's 20th-century development and pop music's inescapability. The book is carefully structured in three parts: "Epiphany," "Development" and "Reconciliation," following not only essay but sonata form. That O'Brien himself arrives in the world at roughly the same time as both the vinyl LP and rock 'n' roll provides an additional resonance for the section titles.

The opening essay, "The Return Of Burt Bacharach," uses Bacharach's 60s Top 40 career and 90s revival as a fitting model for the connective contribution of quality innovation, romance, folkiness, anti-folk, saturation, ornamentation, assimilation and rediscovery at the heart of pop moments. "Back To The Country" covers Harry Smith's *Anthology Of American Folk Music*. It goes on and on, but O'Brien must see it bit

of himself and his DJ father in the ash-hipster Smith's programming of obscure records. Smith's collection also serves as a reminder of the natural, documentary recording technique. "Once there was an emotional—no! to mention a political—stake in having a sense of the reality on the other side of the mic, in visualizing the musicians actually playing and singing, in imagining their lively surroundings.... Recording as constructed artifact began to replace the ideal of recording as preservation of a moment in time."

"Seven Fast Years," which covers The Beatles via the Anthology series, comes right in the center of the book, and reveals a turning point for O'Brien: "I emerged from *A Hard Day's Night* as from a conversion experience. Having walked into the theatre as a solitary observer with more or less random musical tastes, I came out as a member of a generation, sharing a common repertoire with a sea of contemporaries."

His family's mid-60s move to an apartment off Central Park inspires two chapters that tell a matured as their guide, songs like The Beach Boys' "Surfer Girl" and The Zombies' "She's Not There" provide the soundtrack for his teenage reminiscences, particularly those of his brother's groups, one of which was The Flying

Machine, led by a young James Taylor. One of the book's most memorable moments comes when O'Brien hears a new Taylor song some years later and makes it's about a mutual acquaintance from this period. "Right away I have a premonition that this song isn't going to go away. It's going to be leaving it for the rest of my life...it will become common property and thus a casually absent object...It's an artifact connected to my own life. Yet for that very reason it can never possess the mystery of the other songs, the ones whose meanings I pursue and invent and remake."

The book's final section, "Reconciliation," is its darkest. A reminiscence of a friend with whom he compared notes about music in the 70s ends with the friend's suicide. In *The Year Of Overlooked*, he comments on the worldwide ubiquity (globalization, really) of US pop, while "Ambient Night At The Roots Lounge" describes a treasury of recorded sound that dominates the listener in everyday life by the dawn of the 21st century. While civilization does seem to get noisier with every passing year, to some extent O'Brien may be victim of his own encyclopedic intake of cultural offerings. But anyone who's put any time into thinking about listening will find his insights throughout stimulating. □

THE COLLECTED ESSAYS OF MILTON BABBITT

STEPHEN PERLES (EDITOR)
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS HIK \$29.95

By ANDI HAMILTON

Milton Babbitt's musical world is not a simple one. He has said, "I want a piece of music to be literally as close as possible," but his rigorous, uncompromising exploration of the post-Schoenberg compositional universe exists at a high price in inaccessibility. Not that inaccessibility troubles Babbitt. He set out his stall in 1958 with a notorious article in *High Fidelity* magazine under the title (spoiled by the editors) "Who Cares If You Listen?" The piece to offend in the arts appears together with the rest of the 87 year-old composer's considerable writing output in this lavishly, scholarly collection, produced by the institution where he taught.

Babbitt was born in Philadelphia in 1916 and brought up in Jackson, Mississippi. As a student at New York University he studied composition privately with modernist composer Roger Sessions. He was one of the foremost contributors to the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, yet Babbitt started as a jazz convert and wrote the sonnet *Al Sol* for jazz ensemble as well as an unsuccessful Broadway musical. The experimental upturn composer lectured by Philip Glass and the minimalists, he has received many honours and awards, even as his music remains almost unknown to any wider public.

Not that Babbitt cares. The notorious *High Fidelity* piece—which appears here as "The Composer As Specialist"—expresses his belief that the serious composer must accept isolation from the public, developing his or her art in compositions neither intended nor suitable for the average listener. His total serialism involves patches of duration and dynamics as well as pitch, and Babbitt argues that his more "efficient" total language reduces "redundancy" or surplus information and enhances "determinacy."

While popular song is only very partially determined, "[in]volving" its genuine characteristics under considerable alteration of register, rhythm, timbre, dynamics, harmonic structure, texture and other qualities," new composition "demands increased accuracy from the transmitter (the performer) and activity from the receiver (the listener)". That's also true of Babbitt's written output, though his distinctive ornate style has its own redundancy in terms of word counts. But it's witty too, as you'd expect from the composer of such titles as *Joy Of Sexacts*.

Babbitt believes that contemporary composition can't be expected to be more intelligible than contemporary maths or physics: "The composer would do himself and his music an immediate...service by total, resolute and voluntary withdrawal from the public world to one of private performance and electronic

media." In a later article he describes having his fingers burned by *High Fidelity*, complaining that the title "Who Cares If You Listen?" "reflects little of the letter and nothing of the spirit of the article." That's dangerous too, but there's a very truth in his reflection that he's more likely to be known as his author "than as the composer of music to which you may or may not care to listen."

Babbitt might be typicist as the dry, stoic elitist, but he was one of the American pioneers of synthesized and electronic sound in the 1950s and 60s. In a 1964 article on his work with the RCA Synthesizer, he stresses the need to avoid electronic music's sense of sameness and listener fatigue. Unlike composers of the past, he insists, electronic composers have to ask not whether their music exceeds the capacities of performers, but whether it exceeds the perceptual capacities of trained listeners, and he rejects the "humanist" attack on musical science.

Wherever he argues that tape composition was inspired not by the desire to produce "new sounds"—"no composer was dissatisfied with the sheer sound of the orchestra"—but by the need for precision and control. Unwilling to "begin again at the beginning with computer sound synthesis," however, he returned exclusively to neo-electronic media in the 1970s. But probably his most important compositions are these half dozen colourful

works mainly from the 60s where he mixed electronic and acoustic elements.

No might question whether Varèse didn't yearn for "these sounds," yet one of the best articles here is Babbitt's tribute to the older composer, delivered on Varèse's 80th birthday in 1968. In October, he notes, the effect of the different harmonies depends on the different sound-spectra—the timbre—of each instrument. Varèse was involved in a "struggle to create a world of music, not a struggle between...serial and non-serial, total and atonal," he concludes.

"On Having Been And Still Being An American Composer" from 1989 is too wistful and ironic for a selection. Picking up on William Thomson's famous response to the question "What is American music?"—"American music is music written by an American"—Babbitt takes sideways at various tormentors. One of them is the writer of a history of American music who commented, "In the 50s, when composers like Carter and Babbitt would hold sway, a new internationalism replaced the commitment to things American." Babbitt wisely responds, "Would that I had known over whom or what I hold sway for I surely couldn't infer it from the number as versus of my performances, publications, or recordings, or my inability to secure a Suggenheim fellowship." It's not the only misconception to be attacked so enlighteningly in this essential title by an American composer. □

Cross Platform

Sound in other media. This month: Lina Dzuverovic-Russell talks to Brit artist Mark Leckey about taking his sound raids on everyday life into high art spaces, and the SoundSystem he once set up in conversation with a Jacob Epstein statue



Mark Leckey (left) and two of his SoundSystem installations



The Situationist concept of *détournement*—grabbing onto whatever is around you from daily life and making it your own—lies at the heart of British artist Mark Leckey's work. For Leckey, bricolage is a way of "taking an interest in the detritus of the everyday", he explains in his Central London flat, which often features as the starting point of his field recordings. "Being able to mould the detritus into something—the idea that you can import some intent into something, that's quite banal," he continues. "Maybe it's some kind of conscious or unconscious ideology, a will to not accept the world that we're given. The idea of taking something and making it yours is what I learned when I was a Casual [80s brand of 'casualty' dressed UK football supporter], the idea of being a working class youth dressing like they were going out and playing golf."

Leckey first crashed onto the international art scene with his 1999 video *Floucci Made Me Hardcore*. A mashup of documentary snippets from 70s Northern Soul parties and early raves, its hypnotic soundtrack overlaid shows at London's ICA, Tate Britain and New York's Gavin Brown Enterprise. Since then, the scope of his appropriations has expanded beyond video, sound and performance to include a sound sculpture series of roaring "SoundSystems", where Leckey installs in galleries to launch sensory assaults on visitors.

The first SoundSystem came about as a logical progression of Leckey's 2001 piece *Duplicate* (London, *My Part in its Downfall*), his 12 minute psychoanalytical/aphrodisiac sound journey around London's Soho. A cacophonous field recording bursting with street sounds, car horns, police sirens, pouring rain and passing conversations, it occasionally morphs into a more musical form when these noises blend with Leckey's repetitive bedroom mix of 1970s 80s sound effects and pounding bass. In the process of making it, Leckey realised that the most appropriate way to install the piece in an art gallery would be to build a full sound system, like those used for street parties.

"It's this amazing bit of sculpture, a total artwork which has sound but is also visual and visceral," he enthuses. "When it's in the gallery it plays really loud. The bass is churning your stomach so you just get this absolute immersion in this piece of work."

Since then, Leckey's enormous, menacing, custom made sound systems have appeared regularly in galleries. They have also featured at live events, with DJ sets involving fellow artists Ennio D'Amico, Bonnie Camplin and Ed LaLig, all members of Leckey's art collective DonAtelier (pronounced Donatella). Most recently, for his Big Box Statue Action at Tate Britain, Leckey set up a SoundSystem "in conversation" with Jacob Epstein's glabster sculpture, *Jacob And The Angel*. The result was a head on collision of the worlds of the street and the museum, with Leckey and DonAtelier blasting a medley of "the latter part of the 20th century", in his words, at the sculpture in a friendly effort to communicate with it.

"It was all sorts," Leckey explains, "there was Gabba in there to unsettle it, there was The Beach Boys to seduce it. The idea was to attack and plead—I was playing 'Persuasion' by Throbbing Gristle. That was seduction and attack and compliance at the same time."

A deep Britishness permeates all of Leckey's work. London features heavily in most of his projects making them culturally specific. "I do find myself getting entrenched in my Britishness and I don't know if that's a good or a bad thing," he muses, "I can get very horribly monisay about Britain—and I don't like that side of myself particularly. But then again I do get depressed that Britain just seems to be losing a lot of the energy that it used to have and the chaos that it used to be able to create. That anger that was there has dissipated now and is a lot more controlled and cleaner so I do get nostalgic about that dirty side of London."

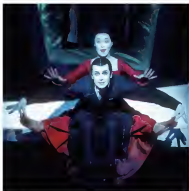
It's a fine line between the diversionary tactics of disengagement and finding that you are unwittingly feeding back into the cultural mainstream by yet again

foregrounding already heavily marketed images of British "cool" musical subcultures. Does Leckey think he is adding to Tony Blair's 'Cool Britannia' export drive? "If you make work about London there's a horrible, huge sign that's got [the Blur hit] 'Puddle' written on it that you have to steer away from and get around. It's always there."

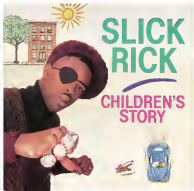
On closer inspection Leckey's effortless free associations do indeed have an introspective side. The work's strength lies in the balance between the celebratory euphonia of youth culture and its underlying melancholia, as Leckey momentarily catches his fashion fixated protagonists coming down from their nocturnal adventures. In the process of soaking up and spewing out the most ephemeral of sounds and images that speak volumes about particular cultural moments, his work has an underlying sense of nostalgia coupled with a critical reflection on contemporary Britain.

"I'm too old to be making work about youth culture," he confesses. "I had a period of being embarrassed about being too identified with making stuff about youth culture but it doesn't matter. I don't think. The stuff that I make is about me being there and how I felt, rather than what it is. It's not so much the subcultures that interest me—it's just that's how I've grown up, so that's what I'm going to talk about."

Leckey has been referred to as the embodiment of 21st century dandy, Balzac's "flâneur-artist"—the sophisticated creature thoroughly immersed in the full splendour of metropolitan chaos. "I'm even more embarrassed about talking about dandies and the flâneur than I am talking about youth culture," he says. "For one I just think it's the most undandy thing you can do, is actually talk about it. It's just a state, it's a way of being." □ Mark Leckey takes part in the European art festival Manifesta in Donatella-San Sebastiano between June-September 2004. Leckey and DonAtelier colleague Bonnie Camplin premiere a new live piece in London this month: see Out There for more details



Tom Wats and Willem Burroughs in *The Black Rider* at the Barbican (left and center); Slick Rick's cover art



THE BLACK RIDER LONDON BARBICAN THEATRE UK

BY ROB THOMAS

A black slab, a Kubrick monolith, descends from the flies. Slick becomes box, spilling out a conglomeration of deformed, damaged asylum inmates. Stille up the band: "Come on along with the Black Rider, we'll have a gay old time..."

This theatrical spectacle, the result of an inspired partnership of Robert Wilson (director), William Burroughs (librettist) and Tom Wats (music), has arrived in London 12 years after its Hamburg premiere. You need to slow on your toes to follow the plot, that's for sure. Extensive character doubling leads to confusion, a player such as Nigel Richards, with his gown-out Phil Oakey half-freaking, casts such a vivid and grotesque shadow in his opening appearances as Robert, a hurting boy, that his later incarnation as Georg Schmid is not discernibly different enough.

The biggest surprise is the resurrection of Canadian singer Mary Margaret O'Hara. Her presence in this production — as bride-to-be Katharine — has been significantly underplayed compared with the role of Marianna Faithful as Peggy, the cowl-flogging magic bullets, but anyone familiar with her 1980 album *Miss America* will remember her twirly way with a vocal line, her swoops and shudders and killerish rasps of anguish and ecstasy. Pleased to report her lyrics is still in good shape. She plays the young daughter of the woodsman who is betrothed to Wilhelm, a clerk who's not, shall we say, too good in the wedding department. The story goes, as told by German Romantic fabulists (and turned into the opera *Der Freischütz* by Carl Maria von Weber in 1819), that Wilhelm makes a pact with the devil in the forest to be supplied with a magazine of magical

bullets that will allow him their intended target, although one of those bullets will find a destination of the devil's choosing.

Robert Wilson's staging is astounding throughout. His colossal interior sets display enormous furniture that shrinks over successive scenes — the house is diminishing in ambience, wasting away through his lack of insight into its own desires. A family portrait, containing actor Richard Strange as its ancestor Kuno, hangs over the household acting as a kind of steeple pronouncing such wisdoms as "to thine own self be true", and often sagely hermetic intentions. In the final scene before the moment of dawn, the portrait, huge worky frame and all, falls in slow motion on top of Mary Margaret O'Hara. In the song "The Brier And The Rose" the two lovers sing while floating in air, forest scenes feature collapsible trees that can turn upside down; Marianna Faithful descends from the rafters becoming a deceptively white rite — Wilson's stark angular staging allows a suspension of disbelief while dragging the spectator into a claustrophobic and murky milieu of horror.

Burroughs' libretto takes in fleshy anachronisms — references to drugs, and a sampled portion of a reported argument between Ernest Hemingway and his agent, are fun to the tale. The clerk's name (Wilhelm = Willem) and the overtones of the central scene where a lover shoots his intended cannot fail to remind you of Wats's own personal schtick, when he accidentally shot his common law wife Jean Volmer in Mexico City in 1951. That overdose alone makes *The Black Rider* more than a deliriant rite collaborative dabble. Wats's music binds the action — an incredible sustained tempo of wavelike, kneadable, beautifully arranged and played by a small ensemble directed by Ben Cuspen and including trumpeter Jerry Edwards in its midst. Glass harmonicas and metallic Bachel-

lie sound sculptures twindle from the pit.

At times Wats's score ascends into the most suggestive esophagy — at those moments you feel the world melting into a soup of anarchy noise. Anyone who still has Wats nailed as merely a scuzzed old berly chronicler of Cali lowlife should be put to rights by this amazing and intimate score, which seems to transmute before your ears between his shifting and uneasy mood. Inevitably it is the beloved who gets it in the neck at the end, and the tragedy is sealed as Wilhelm sheds his resulting implosion in song. He is pulled back into the gallery of debauched lunatics that initially burst out of the black sea, which is best seen bleeding off into the demomorphose as the curtain falls, bound for a future where it will spill its strange cargo into *Naked Lunch*.

THE BOOK OF HIP HOP COVER ART ANDREW EMERY

NITCHILL, REDDLEY PARK G14 9LE

BY PETER SHAWMO

As only one facet of a wider cultural 'movement' whose visual style was as important as its sound, rap music is perhaps more attuned to its look than any other genre of popular music. Its raison d'être is competition, and whether these contests were fought on the walls of the subway, in the parks or on the street corners, it was always the most expressive style — the widest lotuses, the doped dance move or the fyeest, freshest kids — that would win. With graffiti, B-boying and fat boxes as integral to Hip-hop as rhymin' and D'ring, it should come as no surprise that the music would produce a treasure trove of fabulous record covers.

With a wide-eyed visual exposition of the musical style, it's surprising that so few of the original Hip-hop records had covers that made

any reference to graffiti (let alone be actually designed by a graffiti artist). Was it that the entrepreneurs behind the labels were afraid of being associated with such an urban genre? Were the boppers and buggers viewed as vandals rather than artists even among their own peers? Sadly, these are only a couple of the many questions that remain unanswered by *The Book Of Hip Hop Cover Art*.

Written by *Fat Lace* founder and eminence grise of the British Hip-hop journalist fraternity Andrew Emery, *The Book Of Hip Hop Cover Art* is, unsurprisingly, a lightweight coffee table tome. It's a book for when your friends come around to listen to your collection of rare Three Times Cops B-sides. It's not a book that's going to tell you anything you don't already know, except for maybe what the cover of Funk Master Wam's "Believe Patient" looks like. While the cover reproductions range from the zoundy name (Point Black MC's "What At The Party Needs") through brutally shoddy ("The Gato Boys" "We Can't Be Stopped") to sensational and thrilling (Son Of Beanie's *Beaver, Beaver, Beaver*), the writing is pretty pedestrian.

The chapters are roughly divided according to chronology ("When Streetlenses Were Fat: The Old School 1979-1984") or theme ("Left Coast: The Westside Collection"), each with an overarching essay attempting to put some kind of perspective on the art. The essays are fine as basic history, but there's a lot of pat sociology used as a crutch to base the cover art with the music. Meanwhile, the little blabs that accompany many of the images tell you about the records but almost nothing about the design that you couldn't pick up from the most cursory glance at the cover. Books about record cover art are often written by music journalists with little or no interest or background in design but here, with so little written about Hip-hop sleeve art

Cross Platform



Left: The steel city scene. The Human League (top left and bottom), Cabaret Voltaire (top right) and ABC (middle) in 1982. Walter Benjamin (played by Ekkehard Belle) in the underworld in *Shadowtime*

other than fawning puff pieces about *Me! Was, a* feels particularly risible.

The chapters concentrating on recent developments in cover design are particularly thin. "Shine And Stars: The Jiggy Era 2000-Present" is the shortest chapter in the book, but it covers the period when HipHop became the lingua franca of pop music and when its image and style became totally inescapable. The dominant image of HipHop during this period was the Pen & Pencil cover — appears you never heard of (mostly from the South) bearmy superimposed on a background of grotesquely baroque diamonds and jewels — yet there are only two Pen & Pencil covers in the book, and one of them as a glastone. Most infuriating of all, though, is that many of the covers referenced in the text, particularly in the interviews with HipHop photographer extraordinaire George Dibbas, aren't reproduced in the book. Ultimately, *The Book Of Hip Hop Cover Art* is an easy, nostalgic romp through HipHop's glory days. But HipHop was never about nostalgia — nor was it easy.

MADE IN SHEFFIELD: THE BIRTH OF ELECTRONIC POP WEE WOOD (DIRECTOR)

BY ANNE HALDE NESBIT

"I never thought I could be in a group," Human League frontman Phil Oakey deadpans in an interview for this DVD about music in Sheffield. "I thought people in groups were stupid!" The blurb on the back of the package is more enthusiastic: "The best post-punk music in Europe was electronic and for five years the best electronic music came from Sheffield." Highly partisan. Made in Sheffield — directed by Eve

Wood — is a 52-minute documentary exploring the time before Sheffield supergroups The Human League, Cabaret Voltaire and ABC were catapulted onto the international music scene in 1982 and how their steel mining nest.

Sheffield 1972 is portrayed as a pretty grim place. With little or no cultural diversion, groups of young boys took matters into their own hands. Chris Watson from Cabaret Voltaire reminisces about gigs in public toilets and the first time he lived Koolhaas accompanied by dancing two-legged "Autobots". The riled CV concert, he muses, was driving slowly around the city in the back of a van, doors open, blasting out recorded sounds they had gathered around the area.

Punk kicked open the doors for experimentation outside the music business but the trouble with electronics as opposed to beaten up guitars was the cost of the equipment. The Human League's Ian Marsh solved this by building his own synthesizer and the result, a ramshackle oscillator, was enough to get pre-League group The Petre started.

This DVD must Sheffield's early electronic scene through interviews and archive footage. Apart from conversations with Phil Oakey, Martin Ware and Ian Marsh from The Human League/Heaven 17, and Chris Watson, the filmmakers talk to ABC's Stephen Singleton, Pulp's Jarvis Cocker, John Peel, punk group and Gumbrell and writers 213. Joy Division inspired new wave lads The Artery as well as two characters who formed the group The Exiles. The latter play the songs's Benvis & Bathward, with Marfous outbursts like "they [Cabaret Voltaire] were next door, we were next a door." By a cruel twist of fate they left the city exactly at the wrong time and missed out on a record contract. Without going into too much depth, Made In

Sheffield is an enjoyable romp through the beginnings of British electronic pop.

SHADOWTIME MUNICH PRINZREGENTENTHEATER GERMANY

BY BEN WARSON

It had to come — Walter Benjamin: The Opera. Four years in the making, this was *Shadowtime's* world premiere. Further prestige performances are planned in New York, Paris and London. Made as by Brian Fennelough, the Coventry-born composer (1943) who has spent his entire working life abroad. In exile, Fennelough became an icon of modernist integrity. His music is notoriously difficult, pecking parameter changes into minuscule time spans even cutting edge virtuosi cannot achieve, a kind of anti-Minimalism. *Shadowtime's* libretto is by Charles Bernstein, doyen of language poetry, the blind of Gertrude Stein, post-Modernist theory and placelessness that is big in universities in the States.

The project had to arrive because Walter Benjamin's star — scuffed when he committed suicide fleeing the Gestapo in 1940 — has risen and risen. Benjamin's magisterial overview included incisive political critiques of liberal democracy, Nazism and Stalinism. He registered the micro-details of our responses to cultural objects and the subjective bargains induced by changing urban infrastructures. Above all, he celebrated the sheer wacky surrealism of modern life: Mickey Mouse was hitlered, Adolf Hitler perished.

Benjamin's essay "The Work Of Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction" called for artists to break with traditional sales and metaphysics, and take responsibility for the social impact of their

actions. It was a manifesto for future movements: the counterculture, Rock Against Racism, free improvisation, anti-capitalism, Mad Pede — name your poison. Benjamin's texts create acolytes: he solves opposites which can forever hypostatise (art versus politics, self versus conscience, matter versus spirit etc). Any presentation of Benjamin's ideas invites a roasting over slow critical fires.

Benjamin's *Theses* begins in 1940 with Benjamin's death on the Franco-Spanish border. Right at this time we are told: "Once grasped, the lifetime of existence brings Ossin into the simplicity of its fate." Besides being preposterous (and dubious), this statement arrives in the existential language of Martin Heidegger. It would be hard to find a more apposite beginning, since the party that Heidegger joined — the National Socialists — came out of the "eternal gloaming" that led to Benjamin's death among millions of others. Bernstein is not individually egregious in the regard — it is orthodox liberalism to mis Heidegger with Benjamin. However, for those who take seriously Benjamin's fusion of Messianic Judaism and Revolutionary Socialism, it's not an auspicious start.

The attractive folk realism of *Shadowtime's* opening — immigration bureaucrats declare they're "only doing their job"; crude shadow puppets portray the abortive, harrowing flight over the Pyrenees; a doctor pronounces on the condition of Benjamin's heart — dissolves into the phantasmagoria of 20th-century intellectual anatomy. Though today's wars and say-lum realisations provide shocking parallels with the 1930s, such anachronistic realism are ground for the weak of ideas prying the average over educated ineptitude. Applying cut-up and permutation — once extensive techniques, now



Top: Steven Roden's *Fugitives (JST)* and Stephen Vilella's *The Fear Of Heights And Natural Things*

a purely academic formalism — Bernstein reduces Benjamin's urgent statements to the elementary philosophical speculation of a whimsical twisp: "If you can't see it, it can still hurt you; if you can't see it if it can't hurt you still/Can't it can you still see it if it hurt ...". And so on, until the cycle is "complete".

Meanwhile, Fernigheugh's orchestration — played by the Neue Ensemble from Amsterdam, who've been tackling his scores for more than 15 years — flows on, a by-the-byed Detmold potpourri for all occasions. Hardcore serialism wits into romantic melancholy. With the musicians thrust down in the orchestra pit, the drama of interpreting Fernigheugh's difficulty is effaced. The set designers tumbled on pictures of Hitler, the Golem, Marx (Grosz and Karl), the Pope, Gershwin Scholem and Benjamin himself.

Notable by his absence, Bertolt Brecht — the committed communist artist Benjamin thought about endlessly — made historic propositions which Fernigheugh and Bernstein's formalism cannot conceive. The percussionist takes up a strange instrument, an oblong black prism with a gleaming red light: it's an electro-pennywhistle, designed to achieve the "buzz" looking required by the score at a completely predictable pitch: a symbol of the futility of Institutionalized Dada.

Walter Benjamin: *The Opera*. Here's a commission Alabama 3 should have been given.

TREBLE NEW YORK SCULPTURE CENTER

USA

BY ALAN UCHT
Housed in a former police repair shop and tucked away on a short side street is heavily

industrial Long Island City, the Sculpture Center is a refreshing space for Treble, an exhibition of drawing, sculpture and sound installation, part of the spring long New Sound, New York festival. 22 artists contributed works, most from the last decade, which take their inspiration from experimental or pop music, architecture and performance art. It gets off to a strong start right at the entrance. From the street, the viewer passes through a courtyard filled with white rods and speakers emitting a glassy choir-like sound before entering the building. It's fitting that Treble acknowledges pioneering sound installationist Max Neuhaus early in the display showing the drawing and written description for Times Square (a classic of public space situated underground).

The show's most successful synthesis of sound, sculpture and architecture is *The Fear of Heights And Natural Things* by the ubiquitous sound artist Stephen Vilella. A series of speakers hang in an ascending semicircle, emitting subdued sounds that are malleable to the human ear but visible as the speakers vibrate in unison, sometimes very fast, sometimes in a slower pulse. It's a masterful work, evoking sound visually and utilizing silence to a purposeful end.

Near Vilella's piece, a low rumbling sound leads you downstairs to the basement. The stairway above is filled with Gerd Gerber's *vaDUCT*, modified recordings of the expressway just outside the Sculpture Center. The serial transmission of the flow of the traffic gives a new sense of the rhythm of daily urban life; a truly site-specific piece, it's a substantial blend of mapping and soundscaping.

The downstairs space is dominated by corridor

length works. Mungo Thomson's *The Collected Live Recordings of Bob Dylan 1963-1995* is a cute idea — applause edited together from a number of concert recordings (I walk in just as the infamous "Judas" exchange takes place at the 1966 Albert Hall Concert) — but the small speakers make it a lackluster aural experience.

Steven Roden's *Fugitives* places tiny speakers in a series of glass cylinders (made from wine bottles) on a long wooden plank that borders a succession of alcoves filled with metallic bottles. The speakers play one of Roden's compositions, a lovely piece with sustained walk tones and other twangings made by tinkering with his grandfather's violin. Anton Vidokle and Cristian Marroto's *Salto Del Agua* is a DVD installation, a static shot of the god-like exterior of an administrative building in Mexico City. The passing traffic reflected in the building makes a great visual accompaniment to *vaDUCT*, which is still audible a few feet away (and speaker is the Hark intended soundtrack, a perfunctory digital drum). Andras Ray's *Inhalatorium* takes up an airless passageway with low-hanging valved arches on the ceiling. Filled with coarse salt silt on the floor (echoing the pebbles in the courtyard) and yellow lighting, the room has a warm, glazed glow, which renders the audio component, two voices holding long tones, superfluous.

Another interesting work is back upstairs. In a smaller room that holds mostly sculptural works, Jorge Macchi's *Incidental Music* consists of three giant sheets of paper with black ink's staff lines. Upon closer inspection, each line is made up of a news story clipped from a tabloid. The work is accompanied by a piano composition, heard through headphones, which is purportedly

"based on gaps between the lines, forming a composition from negative space." That's not readily apparent, but Macchi's piece is a timely one given the current trend toward the use of silence in free improvisation. Two other works are tripped up in exploring silence — *Five Minute Of Silence*, a performance piece by Mexican artists Francis Alÿs and Rafael Ortega, is displayed on video on a laptop in a crowded restaurant; people are asked to observe a minute of silence. Well, no one talks, but they keep eating, moving for an ambient music of knives and forks (to borrow from Seltzer). Joseph Boushy's *Noiseless Blackboard Eraser* was originally offered for sale as a gesture against the commercialization of a lecture held given at The New School in 1974 (which held erased from the blackboard). The rest of the show is a series of one-liners: like Corneille Parker's earplugs made from collected lint at St Paul's Cathedral's Whispering Gallery, visual ear-securers in branch of blue flowers bearing the title *Once Spoken / Lined When / Was / From Rock On*, and knives, including Brad Tucker's *Fuker Vintage Guitar*, a supposed meeting of Blackadder's Fuller's goodie-dime and colour coded guitar chords that doesn't gel, and Erik Hanson's *Unlabeled From Europe Expressway*, a spiraling sculpture of a speaker cone adorned with the traffic cones from the early Kershner LPs.

The best of these overly simple works is Joseph Grigely and Amy Vogel's sound sculpture *Ibu*, in which a series of people pronounce artist Ed Ruscha's name in various ways. It's a humorous nod to the visual art world and, in calling attention to the diversity of dialects as well as the enthusiasm or confidence of delivery, a modest but effective sociological and linguistic statement. □

The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by David Toop



HAN BENNINK

SOLO
ICP OTT

DESIGNED BY HAN BENNINK

Not a design classic by any stretch of the imagination, Han Bennink's first solo album was a model of self-sufficiency. On the backside (as they say in Holland) you see Bennink's photos of himself, his stove, his ladder, his wood saw. All the details of instruments, track titles and

company address were hand written. A little clipping from a book was pasted into the layout. "He was a part in the act to his music," it reads.

The front is a mixture of printed and hand-posted collage. A Dutch flag still clings to the left hand corner of my copy, but the feather has come adrift (plus is the first thing to go). Three flying birds have been drawn in the right-hand corner and a songbird sings a duet.

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The music is very homeside too, lo-fi recordings of Bennink playing drums, playing with echo, paying homage to Baby Odds, mixing up Tibetan and South East Asian instruments with recordings of bird song and electrical hum.

Probably it all seems a little quaint at this remove, but in 1972 the message was loud and clear. Do it yourself; not just releasing the record, but everything short of working in the

pressing plant (the vital criterion that compromised the whole deal). Inspired by this, and by Bob Cobbing's Writers Forum press, Paul Burwell and I started publishing our own books, releasing cassettes, doing what we could to sidestep the music business. This was very hard work. I don't think Bennink ever made another record cover by sticking feathers onto each and every cover, but once was enough to start a mini-revolution. □

Go To:



If you're inspired by Christoph Cox's interview but still haven't heard "I Am Setting In A Room" by **Armin Lucius** there is no longer any excuse. www.soundsystem.com/luccius.html has the entire, original 1969 version — at 15 minutes and 23 seconds of it — available for download. And while you are at it, there is a full radio interview/documentary on Lucius at the same site, divided up in several parts for easy access.

Musique concrète, electronics, collage, sound-poetry, experimental, microtonal, early industrial, musique brut, sound sculptures, record objects, gallery editions, abstraction and fluxus are just some of the stated areas of interest at the Italian site **Soundohm**.

(www.soundohm.com). Essentially a loose list, this well designed resource goes far beyond the call of duty if not only posts a huge list of records but plenty of information on labels and obscure artists. Though it is constantly filled, so

far only about half of the site actually works. Go here for a lengthy biography of the Osaka-based Verity label, the Taj-Mahal Travellers, Danny van Israel and more. Spanish equivalent, **Artsones** (www.artsones.com/artsones/), is worth a visit even if you don't speak the language. MP3s of compositions by a wide artists such as Kurt Schwitters, Erik Satie, Luigi Russolo, Alison Knowles, Giacomo Balla, Takehisa Kosugi and many more are provided for download.

A man named Will from Louisiana has put his entire record collection — in all its incredibly strange glory — online. **Show And Tell** (www.showandtellmusic.com) has loose genre definitions: Exotica, space age, Df, whistling and Christian, and features the kind of thrift store finds from the 1950s-70s that seem to have travelled from second hand shops all around the world and into the mangled universe of Ebay. Show And Tell is

mostly a mooded cover gallery, with some added explanations and MP3 snippets. And strange gems like the crude *The Sensuously SINGS* by The Sounds of Love (primitive synthetic versions of Bayel and Muzak cassette featuring a moaning female voice) and the esoteric *Needs Choir* in a room full of percussion instruments conjuring up mystic spirits.

In the Christian section there is an unsettling Merrill Wenzel Quartet record, a plane crash victim with severe facial damages whose shocking picture is replicated four times on the sleeve, Charles Trenner's Jones's "New LSD (Leadership, Service & Dedication)" and an educational album called *Pip The Naughty Chicken* by one Eric B. Here telling the story about Pip P., a young chicken who wouldn't obey and ended up in Saratoga hell. □

ANNE HILDE NESET



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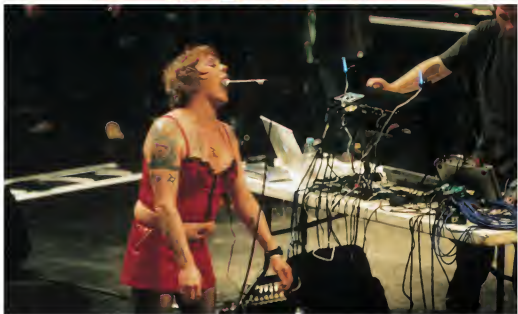
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On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh



THROBBLING GRISTLE LONDON ASTORIA

BY KEN HOLLINGS

"The way you live, structure, conceive and market what you do should be as well thought out as a government coup," Genesis P-Orridge once declared on a previous occasion when Throbbing Gristle recorded live before an audience. "It's a campaign, it has nothing to do with art." That was back in 1980 for the *Headless Earth* album, a little under 18 months before the TG mission was officially terminated, freeing GPO, Peter Christopherson, Casey Funn Turo and Chris Carter to go their separate ways. 23 years later, with the four day RE-TG event at which they were scheduled to reform for a stage performance postponed and a new studio album without a firm release date, you'd be forgiven for wondering just how well thought out any government coup can reasonably be expected to be. But then, TG's ability to exploit and negotiate contradictions has always been a major part of their charm.

Attempted coup: Throbbing Gristle's Genesis P-Orridge, with Chris Carter (below)

Versions of Martin Denny's arrangement of "Quiet Village" are played back on a continuous loop as the audience, mostly toiletholders for the RE-TG debacle, wait eagerly to be sealed inside the white tent interior gaudier of the Astoria for the next hour or so while Throbbing Gristle film material for a forthcoming DVD release. Things, however, are running a little late: people are still being allowed in after the doors, according to the strict timetabling, were supposed to be locked. There's that government coup again.

When TG finally start, it is with quiet hostility, some nervous fumbling and false starts. This encounter, GPO has already informed us in a brilliant defence strategy, is not about us. It's about their "sleazy what happens" "Nothing ever changes," he sings early in the performance's gestural, things-fall-as-if they're being recalled from somewhere far away. It's like meeting up with an old lover who's trying hard to mislead the spark, and you love them for it. Suddenly, amid high-pitched ones and strikes, TG lumber into "Pensance", an old live favourite. Members of the audience are actually singing. It's followed by the sort of slowly building rhythmic workout that was always a

hallmark of TG live.

Heralded by Turo on corner and GPO on wala, it gains volume and pace. At times like this it almost does feel like the low – that chilling contradiction between the minimal movement onstage and the sonic deluge churning around them still holds good. Deployed around their respective workstations, Turo remains placidly self-contained, Carter grimly focused. Christopherson, as always, appears quietly amused by his own thoughts, wearing a T-shirt with the legged "It ain't easy being sleazy" printed across the back.

Meanwhile GPO wanders the stage, looking fabulous in a red PVC miniskirt and cut-off jacket – an uncanny onstage presence, partially possessed of double tongue and partially, thanks to the morsels of modern cosmetic surgery, the new Whitney Houston. The volume and attack are still not quite there, however. "Convincing People" starts to lift the level a little – another of these early open structured pieces that allowed so much strange new stuff to pass through. Next come "Almost Like This" and "Splitting Sky", two tracks from the forthcoming TG Now album, and the energy and focus begins to pick up. Both pieces sound looser and more evenged than

their original studio incarnations. There's some amusing feedback and ring modulator damage going on. You can feel that they're still thinking stuff through with this material – though, as being said, TG's guitar playing, particularly comes into its own. The volume goes up after a deeply subsonic rendering of "Hamburger Lady", and TG start working the deebest harder and harder, giving it their totalitarian all, "How Do You Deal?", also from the new album, gives way to "What A Day", and GPO allows himself to get caught up in the moment of possession, swinging his microphone in mindless circles, staring, twitching, staring and complaining as if it were 1979, and we're back at the Russell Club in Manchester and that government coup really does seem like a conceptual possibility.

Then, while the rest of TG lose themselves in the original rhythm band of "Don't Do What You're Told, Do What You Think", GPO acts out the text for "Discipline", shaking the microphone into his mouth and shivering, his eyes nearly popping out of their cosmetically enhanced sockets. But then, deeply and magnificently frantic though they are, TG are suddenly gone. And we're back with "Quiet Village" playing softly over the PA, and it's the 21st century again. □

AMPLIFY 2004 COLOGNE STADTGARTEN GERMANY

BY ED BAXTER

"Since the period of Haydn, and slightly before, the string quartet form has been the medium of music of the deepest personal expression and contemplative profundity. From that initial promise, a couple of absolutely fundamental questions arise: why a quartet? And why profound?" (As electronic music be profound?) is one of the essential questions we face." Thus spoke Keith Rowe, co-curator of the Cologne labels' fourth international festival, for which he brought together a dozen players from Europe and Japan to dig a little deeper into the art historical context and contemporary significance of electronic improvisation. The Cologne concert was announced as the first part of an event that was to finish in Berlin the following week, a project with a long gestation period that few concertgoers, perhaps, would be able to see through to the end. Rowe promised a 'theatre of questions' rather than solutes, offering the prospect of some heavy duty intellectual listening that would appeal also to the heart.

Each quartet here was made up of two established and seasoned duos, so

confrontation was as likely a result as concord. An all-star cast – Rowe and Tachibana Nakamura, Otono and Sachiko M, Gritzer Muller and Norbert Möslang, Christian Fennesz and Peter Rehberg, Thomas Lehn and Marcus Schmickler, Car Fuhler and Ger-Jan Paas – formed a shifting series of groups over the weekend, coming together at the end of each piece for a neo-MIMED ensemble performance. The last mentioned works revealed the limitations of the festival. A version of Rowe's "Rethink" score for MIMED was ultimately undercut by the turn of an conditioning and lights in the venue. These provided proof of the concern expressed in the programme notes to the effect that the festival's self-generated illusions may be mistaken for profundities. A performance of a Howard Skempton score, comprising the words "waves, shingles, seagulls" proved more problematic.

The players, with their diverse palettes of post-industrial and equally diverse methods of interpretation, failed to make sense of the restrictions. Fennesz provided lush, faux-Romantic washes, the sounds of loach activity encountered in a J.G. Ballard novel. Lehn got carried away in a huge swarm of bottom bottoms, and the entire ensemble struggled on as if to

escape a chain gang from some offshore penal colony. The final ensemble performance simply threw away the script. Gue rapid disappearance of the quieter players in the inevitable mainstream.

A complaint often levelled at electronics players is that the results of their aesthetic decisions are not articulated gesturally, that the result is divorced from any palpable semblance of performance. Möslang, with his hand-held flashing lights, had a set up that was at once elegant, mysterious and demonstrative, while Rowe is always enthralling to watch. But 20 minutes watching Lehn was around his switchboard at Fuhler feverishly turning cranks with his miniature cattle prods provided the need for further visual stimulation. With others (Nakamura, Sachiko M) relatively motionless, one's concentration drifted hither and thither and the game of identifying who was playing what – and who was playing the loudest – gave way rapidly to exhaustion and to a reinforcement of the feeling that throughout the weekend the performers still lacked a truly shared sense of purpose.

A curiosity of electronic music performance is that the players seemingly require just as much time to warm up as their analogue colleagues.

Amplify provided an object lesson in this field. With the members of the newly formed quartets pacing around one another and attempting to fashion a collective grammar, the tendency was towards a retention of each musician's singular vocabulary. The grouping group sounds were over familiar: twittering glissos, prowling sporadic rhythms, noises of dramatic ascending and descending clattering dramatic intent, the rattle associated with transportation systems suggesting lateral shifts, alongside the yearning noises of saturated transmission signals sent out into empty space.

In short, sounds often indicative of urban mobility, failures of communication, or retrograde visions of the future dominated. To join Rowe in his role as instigator, why? A coddle to the concertos in Cologne came in an email from Otono Yoshihide a few days later. Now in Berlin, he said, there'd been some real progress and that something new had emerged in a four hour performance. The scale of that piece suggests that this first leg of Amplify was at best a series of rough sketches and tentative negotiations. It was a fair bet from the outset that these players would eventually enter new territory. But I left Cologne peeved and disaffected. □



LYDIA LUNCH BIRMINGHAM CUSTARD FACTORY/GLEE CLUB UK

BY MARTIN LONGLEY

Last year, Lydia Lunch gave two performances at Birmingham's Pteroc festival: a one-woman theatrical monologue and a dredging-rock set. Her relationship with Birmingham's multi-disciplined celebration of extremity continues this year with two gigs, a photographic exhibition and an audio-visual installation, all under the banner of Sick With Desire.

From Teenage Jesus & The Jerks and R-Eyes, on the ex-Hoover has always been open to jagged jazz improvisation in a heightened noise-rock setting. This year she made her first brief appearance at the Custard Factory, partnered by guitarists Mark Vapiana and Greg Smith. Barcelona's Vapiana is also the

Top: Lydia Lunch's songs of obsession live in *Birmingham*; **Bottom:** Tim Bense's *Science Fiction*; **Far Bottom:** *Blackout Act*

photographer collaborating with Lunch on her accompanying exhibition, *The Scene Of The Crime Could Be Anywhere At Any Time*. As can be expected, she is in a ranting mood. But if she's fuelled by bile, there's joy in the way her words cut through the scabbling guitar dust. Yet it's not so much the audience as Lydia herself who is being bagged out of disgust for her own shortcomings, and her predilection for always choosing "the wrong man".

Displayed in a small room at the Custard Factory, Lunch's photography exhibition consists of backed up and randomly scattered shots, presenting formal, sexually infused images of Lunch, bathed by a blinding and swooping amber light that makes the viewer squint. Her installation is far more striking. In the claustrophobic room, visitors are encouraged to enter in ones and twos. The curator makes it clear that any behaviour is possible – drinking, laughing, dragging – but no stealing any of the artefacts scattered across the muted Lunch bedroom. A scene of an obsessive lover's

psychotic meltdown, her installation bears some resemblance to Nancy Emu's pioneering unravelling. Lunch's bed is likewise soiled, the floor littered with broken glass and beer cans, and an uneasy sofa stands before blood-splattered walls covered with scrawlings like "Witch", "You Are Not Safe", "The Battle Of Sex As An Animal Act" and "Fucked Up By Your Emotions". Meanwhile, a monitor runs a video loop of Lunch porno poses, alternating between her, her entry and clamped nipple switch whirring. Lunch never tells up the exotic; meaning her male partner is almost always headless. The room's amplifier is malfunctioning, depriving the visitor of high volume answer phone snippets, overloaded to make the walls buzz. The real effect of this room is the unnerving sense of normality when the visitor is back on the street.

A week later, Lunch performs her *Songs Of Dissolved Lust* at the Glee Club. Normally a stand-up comedy venue, Lydia neatly transforms it into stand-up misery. Appearing in a raven evening dress and carrying a tiny, glitzing

handbag, her partly read and partly sung set is accompanied by three members of Glee: Drunk Lydia freestyles over troubled and knotted tangles of slide guitar, alto saxophone and muted pocket trumpet. Prowling her forthcoming album, *Smoke In The Shadows*, Lunch's laptop feeds out incongruous salsa piano chords, feral bass leads and low beats to complement Ian White's live bongo and timbale clatter.

Her songs could have given more instrumental space to guitarists James Krehmer and Terry Edwards's brass. Both hunt at a goading, constricted power during their short solo flourishes. She clinches with a spewing condemnation of menfolk at war, while lambasting her own gender for complacency. The PW shortcomings prevent many of her words being audible, but we get the general message. Her aggressive, confrontational, poetically haranguing tantrums spell out sickness of government, sickness of war, sickness of men and sickness of herself. □

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE MUSIQUE ACTUELLE DE VICTORIAVILLE QUEBEC VARIOUS VENUES CANADA

BY JOSEPH WOODWARD

Fully spaced at age 21, the Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville (FIMAV) descends on the mid-mountain dairy farm town northwest of Montreal. It has emerged with its idealism and generosity of spirit intact, with 25 concerts neatly packed into five days folded over a long weekend. The programme covers a swathe of music from the edges of jazz, rock and electronics, plus the burgeoning subculture of assemblage scenes and the occasional contemporary classical entry.

FIMAV 2004 may not have been as well balanced as other recent years, or as action packed as last year's 20th birthday bash, but it offered plenty to think about. Fennosa's solo set fired the Quebec history risk with a sensual and brutal Ambient wall of sound. Kette Matthews collaborated empathetically with Toronto-based found instrument wangle Mike Hansen and Tarnaz Reizakovic – and, better yet, in an

integrated real- and digitised-time duet with Montreal classivist Joel Freedman.

Fennosa's composed as one quarter of table guitar pioneer Keith Rowe's quite haunting *Four Gentlemen Of The Guitar* ensemble along with Bohman Nakamura and Oren Ambarchi. With the lights in the Cinema Laurier turned low, the long seamless set played like another darkly druggy variation on Ambient. It also suggested Morton Feldman's idea of "time in time, music as time" (which Rowe had quoted in a pleasantly surprising press conference, along with his admiration for Mondrian, Shostakovich's 15th string quartet, and "the virtuosity of restraint").

Extremes of volume and density were the party in a meeting of mokey sorts in another inspired tip at the same venue. The often husked, assef saxophonist John Butcher whips over electric guitarist John Moor's crackly whistles, while Thomas Lethi twarled his retro analogue synth, all to conversational ends.

Jeremy Japanese neo-psychodelics was supplied by Aud Mathers Temple while Montreal's Son Shalabi's *Almo Venus* and Fly Pan Am held up the rock end of experimentalism. If the saughey bagheadness

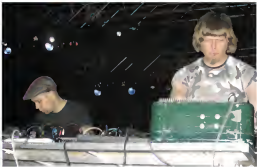
of the latter two groups was intended as a dada touch, it came across as petulant pouting. The best moment in the Shalabi set for all (with his dozen saxophones all in white) was extra musical, as a soloing drummer was pelted with cold cuts by a smirking bandmate.

Later, Shalabi's group robbed trash at Fly Pan Am and ended up onstage in a dancing, wedding mayhem. It must have been someone's idea of fun. In jazz, the most edifying sounds came from configurations at the electroacoustic juncture. Also saxophonist Tim Bense made his long overdue FIMAV debut, with what is arguably his best gig yet. Science Fiction (actually, the Expanded Science Fiction for the occasion) isn't so much a standard brand jazz then and solo vehicle, as a balancing act between collective adnan and abstraction, the purely physical instrumental energies and the sonics of electric guitarist Marc Duquet (more hands-on and visceral) and David Tom (the process-happy one) and keyboardist, Craig Taborn, who is making some of the most intriguing noise on Rhodes anywhere at the moment. Longtime drummer Tom Ranney was a

wonder to watch and hear – methodical yet slightly mad. That made him the perfect foil for Bense's carefully calibrated and perfectly anarchic, new adventure.

A back injury forced Derek Bailey to cancel his trio with FIMAV regulars John Zorn and Ilse Mon. Instead we got a different exciting meeting. Recently devastated free jazz bass legend Henry Gimes had his first encounter with sax player Charles Gayle, whose resemblance to Gimes's old leader Albert Ayler is often noted. But how Gayle surprised the audience by playing like a se in a style closer to Ornette Coleman's idea of freeplay. Bessie Wilton Parker, who announced the ferocious improvising trio as "the emergency replacement band", added his own magisterial presence.

Wesley Piersch Improv pianist Fred Van Howe played a delicately volcanic solo set. The following day madcap percussionist Han Bennink did his business solo, moving from thunderous virtuosity on the drum kit to knocking it over, playing symbols with the steel, playing the steel, and, finally, the show, his short, exhilarating set justifying comparisons with Mose Allison and Marcel Duchamp. □



Clockwise from top left: Wire, Camera Obscura, Pulp, and The Horrors at Triptych

TRIPTYCH GLASGOW VARIOUS VENUES

BY GLAD KENNAN

You can't miss Triptych if you live in Scotland. It has the highest media profile of any would-be alternative/experimental music festival and its sponsors, the beween Temeints, pitch it towards a more self-consciously sophisticated consumer of high end culture than their other pre-teen pleasing indie fest, T in the Park. The whole concept hinges on simultaneous happenings in three different Scottish cities, with shows drawn from the same rotating bill of artists, give or take the odd regional twist or one-off. Their ethos is esotericism-lite, more Four Tet than Fishbach, a slipper to the ass as opposed to the brickbat aesthetic of vanguard Scottish events like Inland, Kill Yr Troid! Nation and Free Radicals, and they like to join the dots across the decades, hooking up first generation upstarts like Orkney and Fairport Convention with virgin plukes like International Airport and Camera Obscura.

At King Tut's, still Scotland's most venue despite being voted the UK's best by Radio 1 listeners because Davis played there, it's almost impossible to see the stage from most room angles, which means most of the audience missed out on T-tall Forth's lecherous asides throughout his performance, pawing and winking

his way around a set of eternally extended one-chord blues, a hypnotic railroad of snarl and electricity borne on a primitive feedback pulse that waned as an eerily antipode to the plastic bling of twinned Triptych reseed, original R&B greaser André Williams.

South of the river, the Mute label had hijacked the cavernous faux industrial space of the former for its label presentation. Blitterswijk Wire blew the roof with a fabulously powerful set. Live, the dynamics of the Send material is so bomb-headed was almost Gabba, with Robert Gobbard's wistful-cymbal/sham boat anchoring monosyllabic riffs that undermined the glib catshans of most rock music by simply never paying off. Vocalist Colin Newman pegged in a kid all the way, bawling out surreal nursery rhyming lines that bolstered the feeling of misanthropic stasis with lots of sticky consonance. Some way off from the rest, guitarist Bruce Gilbert stood motionless, drawing implacable, wax-impacted slabs from his sax strung, the extended silhouette of his guitar neck and his expressionless demeanour making it look like he'd gone fishing. Highlights were the malevolent "Mr. Man's Table" and bassist Graham Lewis's tongue-tipping assault on the Phil Spector "The Agony of Nostalgia". Elsewhere weekly costumes and empty postures were the order of the day, with Llam's unreprising retreat of Public Image Limited

into Metal Box only eclipsed by Pink Grease's dog-ugly take on Ray Music. Pulp Sonic played at bordering volume but there was something gleefully and antithetically comic about their set. Computer nerds with a Charles Atlas makeover, they vacillate between hating bursts of how-much-can-you-handle atonal noise and tediously ordinary beats sculpted from fetishised pieces of kit. Chris & Casey's disappointing DJ set provided more of the same, only in a much more good natured fashion.

The Geographic label's showcase over at the Tea Theatre couldn't have been further removed from all of this self-consciousness. It felt more like music made by humans. The riffs of Glasgow's International Airport have swelled considerably since they ducked underground after the release of their first LP back in 2000. Joining vocalist and guitarist Tom Crossley were ex-Pastel Anabel Wright on bass, current Pastel Katrina Mitchell on drums and Alasdair Roberts on piano, percussion and prepared guitar. A trumpeter and a pianist completed their frontline.

For all their firepower, they still sounded like they were worshipping at the shrine of International Artists-era Red Kwole, albeit updated with some Tori Kado inspired davey stylings. The new material was naught Z-grade Bruno Nicolai played by a Cale-less Velvet

Underground, and pure Glasgow. Also pure Glasgow, though drawing on another archetype altogether, were Camera Obscura, a post-Belle And Sebastian boy/girl outfit that crossed good 60s pop with kitchen sink sadie and oddly affecting songs about school.

Britain's Movietone have added a brass section, which combined with Rachel Cow's clarinet and Kate Wright's acoustic guitar to niddle every track with webs of light. For "We Ride On", originally recorded live on a beach, the group descended into the crowd, dispensing themselves about the room so that the sound of individual instruments took on the aspect of pieces in a puzzle. On top, the rest of the night: spinning Buraka, Neco and The Human League, before to floccus Bob took the stage in a mass of cabins. THR played a great short set, a bubble blast of Morse code rhythms, pulsing melodies and shots of static assembled with a muzzy, somnambulant logic. They also got more well whistles than Pulp Sonic.

The last night brought together Dave Papa's Papa M on a bill with dysfunctional Glasgow legends V-Twin. Saddy Papa's new set-up, an all acoustic trio with his guitar bolstered by violin and cello, played on none of his strengths and all of his weaknesses, his ordinary vocal and uninspired arrangements failing to lift any of his folk songs above a sub Bonnie "Prince" Billy level. □



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Centre Of The Universe(N)
Donna Summer/Jason Forrest(US)
Philip Jeck(UK) Single Unit(N)
GrandpeopleSoundSystem(N) *More to be announced soon and very soon...*



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feed back:

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 Sun 27 June LONDON Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's 0845 129 7543 (tickets free online)
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Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.

Send info to *The Wire*, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK
Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, listings@thewire.co.uk. Compiled by Phil England



Ornette Coleman (left) at Kongsberg; Sefior Coconut at Supersonic and WOMAD



UK festivals

DIASPORA MUSIC VILLAGE

LONDON
Free weekend open air global music feasts in the capital's parkland. Artists include Shyren Bliss Band from India, Madras Akademia & Sir Maroun Group from Morocco, Nantiviva from Poland, Green Mamba from South Africa, Siella Burch & Tassa Drummers from Trinidad & Tobago and Al Ahmady from Yemen, plus local groups with origins from all corners of the globe. Regatta Park 26-27 June, New Gardens 3-4 July, 12:30pm-9pm, free, www.lumeloo-operations.org

EXETER SUMMER FESTIVAL

EXETER
Wide ranging Devon arts festival featuring some leading avant acts including The Magic Band. Feedback: Order from Nexus featuring Alan Lacey et al (see De Stage), Aslak Dals Foundation Sound System, The Jocelyn Pook Ensemble, Gnowendri, Evelyn Glavin, Evelyn Glavin, Ken Russell, Susheela Raman and Gwelo Kirch. Exeter various venues, times/prices vary, 2-18 July, 01392 213161, www.exeter.gov.uk/festival

LITTLE CHILLI

LONDON
Asian music concert series at London's South Bank Centre, featuring Qawwali from the Noori Brothers (16 July, Purcell Room), draped from Lindsay Shovelack and music from Sundara Shama (26, Purcell Room), Kathak dancer Deepak Mahaling with auralist Putayyan Chatterjee

(28), Chinese double bill with Li Xianting on guqin and Cheng Yu on pipa (29, Purcell Room), Ning Baozheng, Hu Bin and the UK Chinese Ensemble (31, Purcell Room), and Pandit Shikumar Sharma and Rahul Sharma on saritar and Shabbar Ahmed Khan on tabla (31, Purcell Room). London Regal Festival Hall remark, 18-31 July, various times and prices, 08103 806400, www.rh.co.uk

LONDON HEADPHONES FESTIVAL

LONDON
Second festival where remote live events are fed into the performance space and accessed via headphones. Among 42 acts performing 20 minute sets over the 14 hour period are Janek Schaefer, Leafcutter John, David Toop, Main, Paul Hood and Jonathan Calek. The event is free, but bring your own headphones. The festival is the London link to a worldwide participatory event. Details at gloucester2000.co.uk/about.php, London Station, Factory, 17 July, noon-2am, free, 020 7729 4343, www.ste51.co.uk

THE SOMERSET HOUSE SERIES

LONDON
Concert series in the open air courtyard of an 18th century building on the banks of the River Thames. PJ Harvey (13-14 July), Lemon Jelly (15), Bebel Gilberto (16), Belle & Sebastian (17-18), Afro Cuban All Stars & Orchestra Baobab (19). London Somerset House, 12/5/23, 0870 145 1120, www.somerset-house.org.uk/summer

SUPERSONIC

BIRMINGHAM
Electronic festival featuring Luke Vibert, Cibo,

Sefior Coconut And His Orchestra, Spektrum, DJ Soud, Passages, Chris Clark, and including Exhibitions By Beat13, The Out Crowd, Some Arts Network plus record stalls and a flea market. Birmingham The Custard Factory 23-24 July, 5pm-4am, £18 (advance), www.weghead.com

WOMAD

READING

Highlights this year include Rokas Tarsas, Grand Orchestre Tarsas De Zarzibar, Tinariwen, Sharon Shannon, Sefior Coconut, David Byrne, Souad Mousi and The Dhol Foundation among many others. Reading Rivermead, 23-25 July, 0118 938 0930, www.womad.org/reading

International festivals

AVANT 904

SPAIN

Summer festivities in an Andalusian castle with John Cale, Shellac, Stereolab, Morissey Squaresville, Steven Malkin and The Jicks, Toss Am, Plummer featuring Julie Cruise, Four Ieri and others. Andalusia Castle Sobal, 2-4 July, www.avantfestival.com

KONFRONTATIONEN

AUSTRIA

Leading improvisation annual with Lawrence Buch Meier, Eric Boerner Quartet with Michael Moore and Han Bennink, Paula's Chance featuring Paul Lewis, Les Diaboliques featuring Inna Schwager, Maggie Nicols and Joffie Lander, The Art Of The Tentacles featuring Erik M, Bobby Few

Quinter, Hans Koch/Martin Schütz/Fredy Studer with Phil Minton, Andy Moor/Terrie Ex/Tony Buckley/Paul Lowers, Hans-Joachim Roedelius solo piano and others. Nickelodent Jazzgalerie, 23-25 July, www.konfrontationen.at

KONGSBERG JAZZ FESTIVAL

NORWAY

40th iteration of this annual summer jazz bash in the rural surroundings of Norway's Kongsberg. Highlights include Ornette Coleman, The Thing, Tomas Stenke, Blonds Redhead, Cato Selva Experience, Silent Black, Joe McPhee, Mats Gustafsson, John Scofield and Milton Nasimont. Kongsberg various venues, 30 June-3 July, www.kongsberg-jazzfestival.no

LIQIDU ARCHITECTURE

AUSTRALIA

Festival of sound arts featuring performances, artist talks and films. Main attractions are minimalist Tony Conrad, Pierre Boulez, a new collaboration between The Necka/Chris Abrahams and Anthony Peters, and newly commissioned works by Australian sound artists at Melbourne's Planetarium, Melbourne 13-18 June 3 July, www.liquidarchitecture.org.au

LOLLAPALOOZA

USA

High profile annual touring package this year featuring Sade Youth, Le Tigre, PJ Harvey, Morissey, Dinosaur Dinosaur, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, Wolf Eyes and The Von Bondies (Day 1), and The Flaming Lips, P.O.S., Wilco, The Polyphonic Spree, The String Cheese Incident, The Dug, Basement Jaxx and Gomez (Day 2).

Dates are as follows: Autumn White River Amphitheatre (14-16 July), Mountain View Shoreline Amphitheatre (17-18), Chula Vista Coors Amphitheatre (20-21), Ventura County Fairgrounds (22-23), Greenwood Village Coors Amphitheatre (26-27), Turkey Plain Theater Center (29-30), Claremont OTE Energy Music Theatre (2-3 August), Toronto Molson Amphitheatre (5-6), Carnegie Field Boomer Music Center (9-10), Columbia Metropolitan Post (12-13), Maryland Theater Center (14-15), New York Randall's Island (16-17), Camden Theater Center at the Waterfront (18-19), Atlanta Turner Field (21-22) and Dallas Sirocco Music Center (24-25). www.billingsbox.com

MIAMI FESTIVAL-ATELIER

FRANCE
Avent annual with Otomo Yoshihide's New Jazz Ensemble, Scotch Trio, Univers Zero, Derek Bailey, Frances-Michel Poirier, Silent Book, Coheuzen, Kitz, "Resonance" Cie Must and Tronemus, Marseille Hospital Caravan (Fried Island) & Friche la Râle de Ma, 27-30 July. 00 33 4 9504 9550. www.amisocorre.biz

NSAI FESTIVAL

FRANCE
International Improv festival featuring Sankho Nantehyial, Harro Duke, William Parker, Peter Brötzmann, Evan Parker, Lu Quan Nish, Barm Phillips, Michel Doneda, John Butcher, Andy Moor, Thomas Lillo, Frédéric Biondy Inger Ziehand others. Pathway NRI, 12-18 July. 00 33 5 4954 2424. www.festival-nai.com

PASTURE MUSIC FESTIVAL AND JUBILEE

The far reaches of US independent music with Jack Rose, Christina Carter, Pitt and many others. Crawford Wisconsin Aspen Farm, 16-18 July. \$15 (day) or \$46 (festival pass). www.demilungie.net/23productions

ROSKILDE

DENMARK
Large scale festival taking in rock, hip-hop and global acts. Highlights include The Bug, Alif

Boosin, Wino, Ill, Dinosaur Pussycat, Wu-Tang Clan, Electroland, UFO, Jennie Ludell, Blackalicious, Lynce Born, Chalki L6, Dumo Sogant, Antares, The Matthew Herbert Big Band, Morassay, Gashan Cozen, Habib Kotte, David Bowie, Di Knash, Muse, Murof, Noagot, Pines, Plumen featuring Julie Cruise, Scotch Pervets, Y and Luke Vitell. Roskilde, 1-4 July. www.roskilde-festival.dk

RYDAL FESTIVAL

SWEDEN
Festival boasting dazzling scenery spinning mill and a "river to drink in" with Murof, Max Richter, Colleen La Piovra, Heermann & Kneve and others. The Museum of Rydal, 2-4 July. 00 46 3326 8025. www.festivalrydal.se

SAFE AS MILK

NORWAY
Intimate festival of independent experimental music on Norway's rural west coast featuring Philip Jeck, Damon Summer/Jeon Forest, Taps Center Of The Universe, Signet Unit and others. Haugevold, 30-31 July. For people travelling from outside Norway. www.safe-as-milk.org/festival

SCHLACHPFEST

GERMANY
Small international festival of improvised and experimental music by the Danube in south-west Germany, featuring the first ever solo performance of a Faust member Hans-Joachim Imker plays organ accompanying a collection of his home videos. Also performing are Stockhausen transcribed Mike Seabook and Clive Bell, Sylvia Hallert and Mike Adcock, who will perform solo with the Imaginary Danube Trio. Signargen, 24 July. 00 49 07571 3333

Special events

RESONANCE FM

UK-THE WORLD
Now shows for the summer include Seb Laves by artists Ivan & Heather Morrison exploring the

everyday lives of ordinary people ranging from an ice fisherman to a head gardener (Wednesdays, 6.30pm), London Resound with John Nicholson exploring the unknown city past and present (Thursdays, 3.30pm), Epistone Time with Dan Wilson's "homemade music, homemade philosophy, rubber bands and alarming fashion tips" (Wednesdays, 3pm) and Down With The Chairman, an NPR file sharing show by Sips Collective (Thursdays, 1.15pm). There's a week of Clear Spots dedicated to live acts from Cultural Cooperation's Sacred Voices Festival (26 June-2 July, 7pm). Other Clear Spots in July include reports from the Searcch festival by Magi Hall and Jim Backhouse, and a portrait of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. Ongoing broadcasts include The Wire's Adventures In Modern Music (Thursdays, 9.30pm) and shows by our contributors Ben Webster (Just 10 Lunch, Wednesdays, 2pm), Savage Penel (Duggens with Sharaz Ghal, Tuesdays, 6pm) and Mike Barnes (Scratching The Surface, alternate Tuesdays, 8.30pm). You can hear Negativland's extraordinary Over The Edge broadcast live from KPFA in California (Saturdays, from 8am) and much else besides. Broadcasts across Central London noon-1am, seven days a week with repeats broadcast outside these times CD quality Web streaming and full listings at www.resonancefm.com

STEVE ROSEN: CUPS INTO CLOUDS...

ITALY
Exhibition of new work by West Coast sound artist which includes drawings, paintings, a sound installation and a series of five sculptures based on computer graphic visualizations of the waveforms. Torino, 6-10 July, Tuesday-Saturday 4.30-7.30pm or by arrangement. 00 39 011 235140 or 00 39 339 6978119. www.este.it

ELECTRIC WEEKEND

UK
This weekend of tactical media, video screenings, talks and workshops at South London's Ritz Cinema and Electric Avenue Studios culminates in an evening dedicated to

US psychedelic noise rock aesthetics from MC5 to Lightning Bolt introduced by The Wire's Edwin Purnoy. Included is a rare screening of Deströy Al Monströ's Strange Röt: Rock Apocalyp, a 60 minute history of Detroit punk rock featuring tracks by John Sinclair, Rob Tyner, Iggy Pop, Nico, Sade, MC5 and Deströy Al Monströ with narration by DJ The Electrifying Mojo as well as rock legend Andre Williams, and others. Also screened are 16 animations set to music by the Lightning Bolt, Wolf Eyes, the Locust and others taken from the forthcoming Load Dead Pivd A Winner. London Ritz Cinema, 27 June, 6pm www.electric-productions.co.uk/electric_weekend

SHIPWRECK RADIO

NORWAY
Nurse With Wound's Steven Stapleton and Colin Potter are marooned on the Lofoten Islands above the Arctic Circle to make sound pieces broadcast as a work in progress over the local radio station, Lofotradio. Streaming is intermittently available on the station's site www.lofotradio.no (you need Windows Media Player to hear the streams). Transmission times are between Saturday 6-7pm (EST), Tuesdays 5-6:15pm (EST), and Thursdays 1-1:15pm (EST) until 25 July. More information on the project at www.arkivno.island.no.

TREBLE

USA
Continuing exhibition explores the interface of sound and visual arts in works by Joseph Beuys, Max Neufuss, Steve Riden, The User's, Emmanuel Macron and others. New York Long Island City Sculpture Center, Thursday-Monday 11-6pm, to 1 August, 95 donation. 001 718 361 1750. www.sculpture-center.org

UNDERKURRANT

UK
Live electronic music at the site of Jim Finner's Longplayer installation by the Thames in London's Docklands. The Lighthouse - Michael Finner's former workshop - will host a performance by Walter Fabick on his space age Chromasone instrument and also by the electro-

Trip Or Squeek



Out There



PJ Harvey (left) and Patti Smith on tour

improvisers Kierpa, who will be using their self-made instruments including the Transcubator and an Enser Recorder. They will be joined on this occasion by live jazz saxophonist Paul Dunmall. Nagelm Death founder Nicholas James Ballen Ols with underground electronic soundscapes. There is also a cruise on the historic MV Vascotto to transport you to the site from Embankment Pier (departs 6pm, returns by 11.45pm, £15). The outward journey will feature newly commissioned electroacoustic works curated by Sonic Arts Network while the return journey features the Soul Jazz Sound System. London Tinsy Bury Wharf, 16 July, 7.30pm, £10, 08700 600 100/020 7494 2004, www.ticketsinfo.co.uk, www.enferment.org

WALLS HAVE EARS P433

IRELAND
A sound installation by Danny McCarthy commissioned for the James Joyce Bloomsbury Centenary. The work uses recordings of Joyce's reading of *Ulysses* made in 1924. Cork The Crawford Gallery, 16 July, 021 4273377, soundworksireland.com

On stage

ANTIRIALS

Only UK dates for the Antirials Midwest 15 piece from New York. Manchester Band On The Wall, 1 July, 8pm, £10/£8, 0161 834 1786, www.bandonthewall.org

GERGE CLINTON & PARLIAMENT/FUNKADELIC

The original black rock, psychedelic soul. Mothership, piloted by the legendary Clinton himself, touches down in East London. London Ocean, 17 July, 7pm, £15 adv, 020 8553 0111, www.ocean.org.uk

MICHAEL BRECKER QUINDECTET &

JIDE LOVAND
US saxophonist Brecker has 15 pieces ensemble to play works from his latest album, *Wide Angles*

while Lovand's quartet includes Hank Jones on piano, Paul Moten (drums) and George Moser (double bass). London Barbican, 3 July, £12-£25, 0645 120 7550, www.barbican.org.uk

COIL

One-off London date for cult group with special guests Githhead. London Ocean, 25 July, 7pm, £16.50 adv, 020 8553 0111, www.ocean.org.uk

FEEDBACK: ORDER FROM NOISE

Alvin Lucier features a stellar LMC/DMN touring package which features artists who work with feedback including Otomo Yoshihide, Nicolas Collins, Yoshimura Nakamura, Kentas 'Pey' Bortas, Knut Aftenrasm and Sarah Washington. Leicester Phoenix Arts (24 June), Newcastle Arts Centre (25), Norwich University of East Anglia (26), London St Luke's (27), Colchester Arts Centre (29), Brighton Komedia (30) and Exeter Phoenix (2 July). www.cmcstours.org.uk

GRACE & DELETE

Improv duo comprising Chris Candy on bass clarinet and James Dunn on 'airpump-bent electronics and trinitas analyser'. Manchester University Whitworth Art Gallery (11 July), Chesham University of Gloucestershire FChl Campus The Chapel, with Verjan Watson and Kyle Hutchins on organs (13), London Birmingham Centre (26), Stratford Other Music (4 August), and London 291 Gallery (11), 01242 254856

PJ HARVEY

West Country avant rock songstress back with a new album, *UH HUH*. Balado T in The Park Festival (11), London Screenem House (13-14) and London Barbican Academy (15). www.pjharvey.net

KANDA BNDNG MAN

Complete sakura superstar. London RPH, 3 July, 7.30pm, £12.50-£22.50, 08703 800 400, www.rph.org.uk

KMFDM + PANIC DMH

Industrial dance and digital hardcore pairing. London Mean Fiddler, 8 July, £11, 020 7434



9562, www.leckey.net

MARK LECKEY

New performances by artist Mark Leckey (see Cross Platform) and Bonnie Campbell. London Conway Hall, 8 July, 7pm, 020 7242 8032

LONDON IMPROVISERS' ORCHESTRA

Monthly showing for the capital's large scale improvising ensemble performing concertos and other one-off, open-ended compositions. London Red Rose Club, 4 July and every first Sunday of the month, 8pm, £5/£3, 020 7263 7263

HUGH MASEKELA & THE JAZZ

JAMAICA ALL STARS

South African resistance trumpeter joins the UK jazz/reggae big band. London Barbican (26 June), Brighton The Dome (27), Newcastle City Hall (29), Basingstoke The Arnd (30), Bristol Colston Hall (2 July), Birmingham Symphony Hall (18). www.sinosax.co.uk

MASSIVE ATTACK

Brison Academy (8-9 July), T in The Park festival at Kinross (10), Ogeon festival at County Wildlife Punctuated Racecourse (11), V2004 at Stafford Weston Park (August 21), V2004 at Chelmsford Hylands Park (22). www.massiveattack.com

OBJECT

Improvised trio of Simon Egan, Daniel Jones and Philip Robinson, who co-exist abstract sounds from fruit, plants and meat connected to a breechey transistor, diatonic, laptop, samplers, amplified objects, electric, acoustic and stringless guitars, prepared CDs, mindbobs, trumpets, saxophone, bongo, record players, radios, field recordings and the human voice, all of this backed with live visuals. Exeter Phoenix Black Box Media Centre, 14 July, 7.30pm, £4, citycircuitonlybodyofmyreserve.com

TDDO RUNDGREN & THE LIARS

First UK concert in ten years from the veteran rock outsider and producer with his new group

(not to be confused with New York post-punkers Liars). Royal Festival Hall, 15 July, 7.45pm, £27.50-£20, 06703 890400, www.rh.org.uk

PATTI SMITH

The New York punk poet teams with a new album, *Tampa*. Birmingham Academy (30 June), Edinburgh Usher Hall (1 July), Manchester University (2) and London Brodus Academy (3). www.pattismithe.com

DAMO SUZUKI

The former Cat vocalist on his New Ending Tour, with The Wire's very own scribe Mike Barnes giving it well behind the tapes, among others. London Bull & Gate (14 July). www.damosuzuki.co.uk

TELEVISION

New York's first native Marquee Moon, etc. London University of London Union (23 June), Glasgow The Arches (24), Dublin The Village (25), Gloucestershire Festival (27), Manchester Academy (2 July) and London Barbican Academy (3, last two opening for Patti Smith). www.marqueemon.com

DAVID THOMAS & TWO PALE BOYS

Pero Uzu frontman with his accompanying instrumental sidekicks. London The Sports, 10 July, 7pm, £15, 020 7392 9032, www.pslz.co.uk

WILCO

New six-piece line-up, now featuring Nels Cline on guitar, preview their new *Nonsex* album, *A Ghost Is Born*. Glasgow Queen Margaret Union (13 July), Manchester Academy (14) and London Astoria (15). www.wilco.world.net

BRIAN WILSON: SMILE

UK

The Beach Boys offer another opportunity to hear his legendary 'lost' Smile album as well as new material from his latest *Gestalt*. In Over My Head, St Austell Eden Project (18 July), Oxford Apollo Theatre (17), Portsmouth Birchall (19), Ipswich Regent Theatre (20), Manchester Apollo Theatre (22), Royal Festival Hall (24-25 & 27-28). www.brianwilson.com

WU-TANG CLAN

Hip-hop collective play two shows with a line-up that includes RZA, GZA, Method Man, Inspectah Deck, Masta Killa, U-God and Cappadocia. London
Hammersmith Apollo, 8-9 July £25, £20 8148 8600, www.wutang.com

Club spaces

BACK IN YOUR TOWN

A monthly improvisation series put together by Spring Heel Jack's Ashley Wales and trumpet player Ian R Watson. This month features Wales and Watson with David Toop, Eddie Pivovet, John Coxon, John Edwards, Rhodi Davies, Petr Flood and Peter Marsh. London Red Rose Club, 15 July and each third Thursday of each month, 8-11pm, £5/£3, 020 7263 7265

BOAT TING

Edible cultural evening on a boat moored on the Thames. This month hosts Metrol/Lol Cocks/Lol Edwards, Elton Dlatk/Josma des Champs/Mark Fletcher, Stryk/Midgley/Alia West/Mat Miller and instrumental rockers Nought. London The Yacht Club, 26 July/very last Monday of the month, 7pm, £5/£2.50, 020 678 5094, www.boat-ting.com

CCA

CCA's Centre for Contemporary Arts hosts the duo of AMM members Keith Rowe on guitar and John Tilbury on piano (1 July). Two days later Rowe performs with The Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra (3). Glasgow CCA, various times and prices, 0141 332 3225, www.cca-glasgow.com

CLUB SPORADIC

New Loughborough improvisation night featuring the Plexus duo of Murray Ward and Red Warner on guitars and electronics. Loughborough Swan in the Rushes, 9 July, 8.30pm, 01509 217014, clubspodic.freeusers.com

CUSHIONS

This month's name for the Bohman brothers'

experimental weekly. The programme features Mike Weber & Lot Cardill, Fred Lorange-Holm & John Butcher, Noah Phillips, Ian Smith & Dominic Lush (5 July), Wavemans evening (12); Helena plus Gusa Garside, Thunderbolt, Richard Thomas (18); Chris Carey & James Dunn, Rob Mills & Tom Scott, Geoff Lough & Laurence Lassalle (26). London Bonington Centre, Mondays, 8pm, 54/£3, 07904 067 409

LIVE

Monthly live electronic music event featuring new Warp Records signings Team Shadetek from New York plus support. Liverpool FACT, 27 July, 7-11pm, £3/£2, 0151 707 4450, www.fact.co.uk

HYBRIDITY

Of mixes, avant garde and experimental North African and Middle Eastern beats with broken dub, audio literature, modern classical and minimal drum 'n' bass with help from Egyptian percussionist Oula Oue Dancer. London Cafe 1001, every first Wednesday and fourth Tuesday of the month, 6-10.30pm, free, 020 7247 9519, @Hybridity.com

IMPROV AT THE PRINTING HOUSE

Open improvisation series continues with the duo of Mark Wastell (amplified textures) and Phil Durant (computer) from London and the local trio of David Lacey (percussion/electronics), Dennis McDuffy (computer) and Phil Vogel (computer) playing in various combinations Dublin The Printing House, 30 July, 8.30pm, EUR10, www.denis-mcduffy.com

KLUNKER

The improvised music and of the wall performance club go out with a bang on a final date before taking a well-earned summer break but there's also a one-off evening later in the month. Sara Saki from Osaka, Kay J Grant/Alan Tomlinson, Bicycle Dip Sex featuring Hugh Maczotte and Veyron Westor playing to films and music songs from the Best Shift Orchestra (1 July), Elton Geary/Mark Fletcher/Josma Deschamps, Geoff Leigh/Laurence Lassalle and

poetry from Stryk/Midgley (27). London Sussex, 8pm, £3/£2, 020 8806 8216, www.klunker.co.uk

MISO

Glasgow's monthly night for new electronics features a live set from Kephlet's Cylab plus OI e-arc. Glasgow 13th Night Cafe, 3 July/very first Saturday of the month, 9pm-midnight, 0141 553 1638, www.13thnecafe.co.uk, www.13necafe.com

THE SPITZ

Live music at this East End venue includes steel guitarist BJ Cole and guests (5 July). David Aspinning/bluesman Shiyani Ngobho (7), Daniel Thomas & Two Pale Boys (10), Jayi Ilew & Band from Bulgaria (13), Le Sano-signe Francaise with d'Orange, Heller, Hypo, Erik Mikkinen and nous (15), and Manada from Indonesia (20). London The Spitz, 7pm, prices vary, 020 7392 9032, www.the-spitz.co.uk

STROKE THE MOOSE

Night of electronica featuring Cheap Machines, smooze, J Tarnock, Slatkoffones, Thomas Barner. London The Foundry, 1 July, 7pm-11pm, free, 020 7738 4900

888

Musac and arts collective present live music and visuals from Alexander Tucker on guitar, vocals and electronics, Angharad Davies/Ben Drew improvise on vocals and electronics, Lee Gamble, Spontaneous Music Group, plus short films and projections. London 291 Gallery, 14th July/second Wednesday of the month, 8pm, free entry, 020 7613 5676, www.888.co.uk

Incoming

JAZZ & MULHONEY

FRANCE Jazz and improvisation fest with Barry Guy, Co Stoffel Sedet, Mino Sheldyzer/Pierre Feno, Louis Scavo's Nagelsa Walks, Vondermark Five, Carole Bauer, the Thing with Joe McPhee, Christine

Wachasaka, Ku Fengja, Eugene Chadbourne, Luc Es, Andy Moor, Fred Van Hove and others. Mulhouse, 22-28 August, 00 33 3 8925 2332, www.jazz-mulhouse.org

JAZZ EM AGOSTO

PORTUGAL Portuguese annual festival pushing the jazz envelope. New Orchestra directed by George Lewis (3 August), Pezgy Les Band (4), François Moake Orchestra-Acquety Quartet and The Thing (5), Osorio Yoshikida's New Jazz Quartet featuring Mats Gustafsson and Ginter Batty Sammer (6), Franz Houtanger Regener Orchestra XI, Martin Willeault/Osorio Yoshikida, Arne Hendriksen (7), Paul Cami Orchestra, Paul Penney/Laure Ellis and Nina/Jesus Santandrea (8). Lisbon Centro de Arte Moderna, 3-8 August, 00 351 217 823 475, www.jazzportugal.net

SOUNDS LIKE NEW

USA The avant-garde comes out in masses. Allen Lucier, Robert Ashley, Peggy Lee Barbara, George Lewis, Phil Niblock, Paulino Oliveira, Leroy Jenkins, Malcom Richard Abrahams, Nicolas Collins, Fred Foward, Mark Dresser, David Behrman, David Roseboom, Laetitia Sonami, Anne Lockwood, Roscoe Mitchell, Michael J Schumacher, David First, Tom Hamilton and others. New York La Molla and other venues, 14-17 October, www.internationalarts.org

Out There items for the August issue should reach us by Friday 2 July

UK Radio

National

BBC RADIO 1 97-99 PM

JOHN PEELE

Tuesday Thursday 10pm-midnight
Leftfield music across the board

GILLES PETERSON

Thursday 7pm-2am
Post and jazz

FARIO & GROOVERIDER

Saturday 1-3 am. Vinyard thru 'n' base

WESTWOOD RAP SHOW

Friday 9-11pm/Saturday 9pm-midnight
Hip-hop flavas

REGGAE DANCEHALL NITE

Saturday midnight-2am. Bass culture

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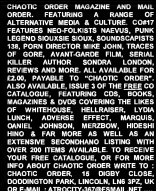
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Epiphanies

Neil Cooper gets misty eyed over the provocative libertine spirit of Liverpool's early 80s new wave nightclub, Plato's Ballroom

Pickwick papers: Flyer from Plato's Ballroom, Liverpool, 1981

Mr Pickwick's was a Liverpool legend, even long before the handful of wet Wednesdays when it would transform into Plato's Ballroom. A city centre chicken-in-a-basket dive beside a deserted carpark on my mind's land, it once aspired to super club classiness: the kind of place that inspired Tony Hatch to write "Downtown". By 1981, however, its pseudo-Dickensian interior was reduced to hosting midweek grab-agranny nights. In the most densely populated district in Europe, there were a million nitespots like this – provided that insurance job fires hadn't claimed them first.

The one thing Mr Pickwick's had going for it was its semicircular dancefloor, the biggest in town. A raised platform around its rim allowed diners – squeezed into kiddie-size tables with fringe shaded lamps casting an unhealthy yellow hue – enough distance to focus on the stage without their mastications being disturbed. Too light entertainment for all. Even so, nobody danced.

Plato's Ballroom announced itself as a series of disaffected, self-consciously highbrow silhouetted posters plastered around the lip end of town. Beneath the list of group names, it also announced that there would be "Filme/Performance", and something called a "Videotexte". Intriguing.

Of course, I really went for New Order. It was the former Joy Division's first proper Liverpool date since Ian Curtis's suicide the previous summer. That's what pulled the punters in early to watch a performance art piece in which the protagonist methodically broke out of a coffin-sized box on that big old dancefloor while a tape loop relayed that he was "in a box... and I'm angry". There was a poet too, and as the groups played, arty films like *The Chicken Andouille* and *Eraserhead* flickered monochrome shapes across them.

With our Belzen haricuts and utility garb, we devotees were suitably reverent to a pre-lux'd yet New Order, but there was something else going on too, a sensory overload suggesting possibilities beyond mere music. It was exhilarating, mind-expanding and like nothing I'd experienced before. I wanted more.

When A Certain Ratio, then at their most exploratory, post-New York persuasive peak, played a fortnight later, the accompaniment consisted of a Wild West show, complete with lassos, knife-throwing and glamorous assistants. More performance art, involving toisbags, paint and a bucket of water,

followed. Kenneth Anger films thrust devils and angels in our faces; jaded sailors straight out of Jean Genet extravagantly tossed themselves off.

Over the next month, The Ouruti Column followed; then Cabaret Voltaire, still a trio in the thick of their classic Rough Trade period, played against a backdrop of *Nosferatu*. Astonishingly, the ticket was a xeroxed A5 booklet containing photographs of naked men *enrôlé* motorbikes. This typified Plato's Ballroom's provocative libertine spirit, where, beyond the night's main event, audiences could be confounded by acts eccentric, experimental and often ad hoc. Ludus, Eric Random, Jell, Think Of The Winter, Windows, Alvin The Aardvark And The Fuzzy Ants, Rat Tat Tat Tat; all of them looked against the pinks of the encroaching musical orthodoxy springing up on their own doorstep. Plato's arty, Manchester bias cooked a snook at the rockist cartoon psychedelia spawned in Eno's, Liverpool's already famous punk club. Local heroes, who needed them?

There were only three records I remember ever being played in Plato's: the striking white funk of Manouche Noë's "Fathi", The Pop Group's terrifying "She Is Beyond Good And Evil", and, crucially, "The Adventures Of Grandmaster Flash On The Wheels Of Steel". The latter, with its quirkfire slicing and dicing of Blondie, Chic and, fuck, Queen, sounded like nothing on earth. No wonder no one danced.

Yet, for underage thrillseekers like me, with ideas above their station and a sense of austere chic solitude gleaned from Penguin Modern Classics, it was an underground wonderland reeking of Welmer decadence and higher knowledge that only the most ill-thought exchanges make real. Now here I was, on the periphery, but undoubtedly in.

Plato's Ballroom was run by a bunch of chorons calling themselves the "Situationalist Youth Collective". This was primarily Nathan McGough and Arthur McDonald, who played in The Royal Family And The Pop Group, and released a single, "Art On 45" on Factory Records. The idea was to take art out of the galleries and into a club environment, while offering more interesting groups a platform beyond the pub toilet crowd. Détournement by any other name. Like ACR, McGough had just returned from New York, and, judging by the quotations on the Plato's tickets that became works of art in themselves, he was clued into Guy Debord and Joseph Beuys, whose picture turned up on Plato's posters.

Four shows were planned. As it was, there ended up being ten nights spaced out over a year. Only Throbbing Gristle, the ultimate Plato's Ballroom bill-toppers, never happened. They fell apart before they could make it. Jeh Wobble's then nameless post-PIL band with drummer Jim Walker – later Ke-Rang, then The Human Condition – debuted instead. Thrusters Clock DNA played shortly before spitting in two.

Finally, Royal Family And The Pop themselves headlined to a near empty room. The group played on, but the films stopped. So did the art. The Videotexte? Never happened.

By summertime, the spectacle moved onto the streets for real, and what became known as the Toxteth riots changed everything. Over at Plato's, Orange Juice's fizzy pop moved in to provide the only fun in town. ACR played again in September. They brought a dance troupe called The Jazz Defektores. Somehow, it was nice to see the dancefloor used at last in the way it was intended.

A year later, just up the motorway, the Hacienda opened in Manchester. McGough departed with it. For a while, nobody danced there either. Then McGough ended up looking after a ramshackle bunch of indie toxtewarps called Happy Mondays, who put smiles back on everybody's faces. 23 years on, punkfunk is all the rage. Records by ACR and The Pop Group are the soundtrack in Glasgow's Optimo club, as well as at the Offit: Onm night at an Edinburgh club called, of all things, Cabaret Voltaire. Both put on acts that are so 1981 it hurts.

Meanwhile, this year I was at Dundee Contemporary Arts, watching Liverpool based sound artist Philip Kirk manipulate an array of antique turntables in the cacophony of sound and vision that is the Kill Your Tamed Notion festival. The next day, hunched over laptops, Christian Fennesz's Phonotopics improvised a score to Gustav Deutsch's film *let*, an archival cut-up of 20th century manners projected in separate streams on all four walls. A couple of weeks later I'm in an upstairs studio for Rounish, a Sunday night Glasgow happening organised by artist Lucy McKenzie. Onstage, Linder Sterling, formerly of Ludus, is warbling scat snatches of "Misty" in a collage of rap, transistor radio dial tones and random noises off. We've just watched a film and a retro-styled slideshow of left backed modern romance. It's art. An event. Top entertainment for all. Nobody dances, and it may not be Mr Pickwick's, but it's a perfect spectacle anyway. □



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